

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Academic Libraries, Information Literacy,

and Higher Education Accreditation

A thesis Submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Masters of Library

and Information Science (MLIS)

by

William Pashaie

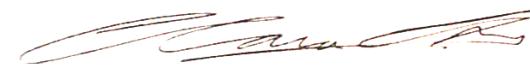
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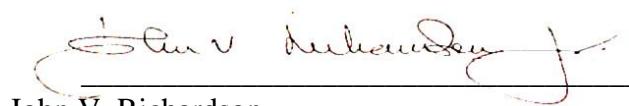
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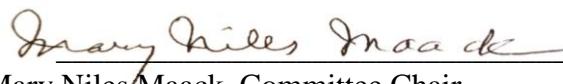
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2005

IN DEDICATION

To my family who supported me in so many ways
as I made my way through graduate school,
my parents, Vafa and Amir Pashaie,
and my sisters, Neda Pashaie and Dahlia Pashaie

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Academic Libraries, Information Literacy,
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The focus of this thesis was the manner in which the seven commissions on higher education of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States view issues related to information literacy instruction and academic libraries.

Analysis was based upon the text found within the documents containing the standards and criteria for accreditation by these commissions. Other primary source documents published by accrediting agencies, governmental agencies, specialized agencies, and academic organizations were also taken into account. As well, there was a consideration of these issues as discussed in the professional literature.

The conclusions drawn from this analysis included: 1) great emphasis given by the commissions to the learner-centered model of education; 2) the significance of developing a culture of evidence using assessment, especially as it concerns measurement of student learning outcomes, in determining the quality of the learner-centered model; 3) the growing emphasis on

the role of the academic library as an important part of the teaching/learning process; 4) and the increasing opportunity for collaboration between librarians and faculty in providing information literacy instruction.

Recommendations include: 1) academic libraries using documents from specialized agencies such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) to help articulate and measure student learning outcomes as they pertain to information literacy; 2) increasing librarian involvement with campus-wide assessment efforts; and 3) increasing librarian involvement and interaction with the process of accreditation.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Accreditation is a well-established evaluation tool used to certify that the programs and courses offered by an institution are suitable for the degree to which they lead, and that the methods and processes used at the institution are appropriate for the institution's stated mission and goals. According to the U.S. Department of Education, some functions of accreditation include:

1. Verifying that an institution or program meets established standards;
2. Assisting prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions;
3. Assisting institutions in determining the acceptability of transfer credits;
4. Helping to identify institutions and programs for the investment of public and private funds;
5. Protecting an institution against harmful internal and external pressure;
6. Creating goals for self-improvement of weaker programs and stimulating a general raising of standards among educational institutions;
7. Involving the faculty and staff comprehensively in institutional evaluation and planning;
8. Establishing criteria for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses offering such preparation; and
9. Providing one of several considerations used as a basis for determining eligibility for Federal assistance.¹

Librarians may have some familiarity with accreditation since the program they attended to obtain their degree was probably accredited by the American Library Association. This form of accreditation is "programmatic accreditation," and applies to certain programs within an

¹ Quoted from: U.S. Department of Education, *Accreditation in the United States*(2004, accessed 29 Nov. 2004); available from http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg2.html.

institution. However, the institution itself was also more than likely accredited. Such institutional accreditation in the United States is performed by regional accrediting agencies.

At the present time, six regional accrediting agencies are responsible for various regions of the country.² Accreditation for institutions is solely voluntary and the six agencies have no legal power over institutions of higher education. Instead, the role of accrediting bodies is to promote high quality standards and to guarantee excellence in meeting the goals and objectives set by the institutions themselves.³

Traditionally, regional accreditation standards have always paid considerable attention to academic libraries. Libraries were generally viewed (in theory, anyway) as centers for intellectual life at the institution, apparently providing benefit by their mere existence. This view held a particular appreciation of the need for a “good” library as a reflection of a good institution. Good libraries were defined as repositories with large, well-selected collections of books and journals designed to support the curricula at the campus. Students’ ability in obtaining necessary information from the library’s collections was generally expected, but never documented.

It was relatively straightforward and logical to take input level measures like the size of the collections, talk about the features of the library building, or discuss the number of hours that the library was open to serve its community. But times have changed and many educational assumptions about libraries have lost their validity.

² Some of the regional accrediting agencies have begun to recognize some post-secondary institution not on U.S. soil.

³ While accrediting agencies insist on their non-governmental role, one finds it hard to argue with the view of them as quasi-governmental bodies, especially since the power to grant recognition to these agencies lies with the U.S. Secretary of Education, and since the government can withhold funding for research and student financial aid from institutions that are not accredited. Though voluntary, given these conditions it would certainly be imprudent for an institution not to seek accreditation.

As free access to information on the open web becomes more and more ubiquitous, the library has had to redefine its role within the campus. This change has brought with it new challenges and new opportunities for academic libraries and their programs. This paper will serve as a record of regional accreditation's view of the current educational environment and the libraries' role within that environment.

Scope Statement

The purpose of the present work is to provide an overview of the current standards and criteria put forth by the seven commissions on higher education of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. The major focus of this paper will be on the role of outcomes assessment, especially as it relates to academic libraries and Information Literacy programs.

The documents containing the standards and criteria examined will include those by:

1. Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Higher Education;
2. New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education;
3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission;
4. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;
5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges;
6. The two commissions within the Western Association of Schools and Colleges: Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

Other primary source documents published by accrediting agencies, governmental agencies, specialized agencies, and academic organizations will also be taken into account. As well, there will be a consideration of these issues as discussed in the professional literature.

Research Questions

1. Given the formulation of the present standards, what are the commonalities emphasized by all the regional accrediting agencies in terms of educational focus, institutional expectations, and assessment requirements?

- What implications do these present standards have for academic libraries and information literacy programs?
- As described by articles in the professional literature, how have libraries responded?

2. What are the similarities and differences in the seven regional accrediting commissions' standards regarding libraries and information literacy programs?

3. To what extent is information literacy included in the regional commissions' standards for accreditation?

- Judging from the standards, what role are libraries supposed to play in providing and supporting information literacy?
- What implications does the new emphasis on outcomes assessment have for information literacy programs?

Review of Contents

Chapter 1 offers a history of information literacy within the context of higher education institutions. Chapter 2 discusses the manner in which today's system of accreditation came about in the United States and provides a literature review on the subject of accreditation, academic libraries, and information literacy. Chapter 3 identifies and analyzes key statements within Middle States's standards; Chapter 4 does the same with the New England Association; and Chapter 5 does the same with the two Commissions on higher education within the Western

Association. These three associations each receive their own chapter because they specifically refer to information literacy in their standards. The rest of the regional commissions (North Central, Northwest, and Southern), making no specific reference to information literacy, are all placed within Chapter 6. Finally, the concluding chapter provides a synthesis of the key points analyzed within the previous chapters.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF INFORMATION LITERACY

Introduction

Ever since the American *Library Journal* was launched in 1876 a body of literature has been devoted to the role of the librarian as educator. A topic of frequent discussion has been the education of the user in effective and efficient use of library resources. The present chapter will provide a brief historical background for the development of bibliographic instruction and information literacy instruction.

Literacy in a Culture of Information

The need for an informed people has had a long history in the United States. Thomas Jefferson in 1787 wrote:

The way to prevent these irregular interpositions of the people is to give them full information [...] were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.⁴

The importance of information access and literacy, then, has been recognized since the birth of this nation. But the idea that the library had a role to play in enabling people to use such information did not truly emerge until the mid- to late-nineteenth century—the same era that saw the beginnings of the “transformation of American scholarship.”⁵

The Rise of Academic Reform

⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *A Letter to Edward Carrington* (16 Jan. 1787, accessed 4 May 2004); available from http://presspubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_speechs8.html.

⁵ Samuel Rothstein, *The Development of Reference Services through Academic Traditions, Public Library Practice, and Special Librarianship* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 1955), 7.

Postsecondary education in the United States before the late nineteenth century was generally conducted at institutions that were primarily religious in nature. Here, the curriculum was comprised of a prescribed set of courses such as the classical languages or natural philosophy.

The decades following the Civil War, however, saw a rapid and sometimes tumultuous shift from an agrarian to an urban society. This period was referred to by terms like industrialism, capitalism, individualism, populism, or progressivism.⁶ Reform was in the air and that mood affected every aspect of American life, including higher education.

Table 1
Expansion in the Number of Colleges and Universities Up to the End of the Nineteenth Century⁷

Period	Number of Colleges Established in the U.S.
1638 to 1819	49 institutions (40 of them private ones)
1820 to 1859	240 institutions (225 of them private ones)
1860 to 1899	432 institutions (348 of them private ones)

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century new conceptions of service and research began to shape the American definition of “the university.” With these conceptions came a tendency toward a more flexible, departmentalized curriculum.⁸ The emergence of distinct departments of learning within the college or university, and the presence of an ever larger number of students, led to an increase in the size and complexity of American higher education (see table 2).

⁶ Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change: America Transforms Itself, 1900-1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, c1993), 312-313.

⁷ Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "The Shaping of Higher Education: The Formative Years in the United States, 1890 to 1940," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 41-42.

⁸ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 12.

Table 2

Scale of U.S. Private and Public Higher Education: 1897, 1924, 1934⁹

	1897		1924		1934	
	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public
Mean number of students	256	415	755	2,165	858	2,810
Median number of students	128	242	359	1,225	382	1,561

Along with the rapid rise of large universities came the growth of specializations.

Columbia and Michigan, for example, set up chairs in history in 1857; and Johns Hopkins, founded in 1876, devoted itself to the German model of the university as an institute for research.¹⁰

The needs and working habits of the newly emerging researchers set the tone for a different view of the library from that held by previous gentleman-scholars. Typifying the German-trained historians of the era, Herbert Baxter Adams wrote in 1887:

The library is, in a most important sense, the center of the University life [...] the place where it is located is the place towards which teachers and students alike must turn, in order to find the means of pursuing their investigations.¹¹

Such statements from the late nineteenth century clearly express the newly formed dependence of the scholar upon the library. And closely related to this increased need for information was the need for easy and efficient access to materials.

Herbert Adams, complaining that searching for materials in the typical college library was the equivalent of looking for a needle in a haystack, upheld the value in Dewey's reorganization of the Columbia library where an attempt had been made to "organize so

⁹ Based on Goldin and Katz: 44.

¹⁰ Rothstein, 8.

¹¹ Ibid., 43.

thoroughly its literary resources in any given field like history or political science that they can be speedily massed upon a given point with [...] precision and certainty.”¹² In making such statements, the notion Adams had in mind was assistance to “the undergraduate and the neophyte in learning rather than aid for the mature scholar.”¹³

The library was transformed from a repository for knowledge to an intellectual workshop, and the work of the librarian gradually began to change from that of a curator. The need for instruction in the efficient and effective use of library resources for research led to the concept of librarian as educator, a role that came to be well accepted by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴

An active promoter of library education far ahead of his time, the Harvard University librarian Justin Winsor envisioned the library as “the grand rendezvous of the college for teacher and pupil.”¹⁵ Winsor was a great advocate of the education of student and faculty in the use of books and libraries. And it was Melvil Dewey himself who organized reference services at the Columbia College in the 1880s and taught future librarians to provide “discriminating counsel,” and “direct training” that would enable students to become familiar with library resources so that they could “use them intelligently.”¹⁶

By the turn of the century, discourse that sounds surprisingly modern may be found in statements such as that of Lucy Salmon who argued persuasively at an American Library

¹² Ibid., 13.

¹³ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴ John A. Kalmbach, “Library Instruction: Can It Really Make a Difference for Junior-Community College Students?,” *Ohio Media Spectrum* 41 (1989): 28.

¹⁵ Justin Winsor, “College Libraries as Aids to Instruction,” in *User Instruction in Academic Libraries: A Century of Selected Readings*, ed. Larry L. Hardesty, John P. Schmitt, and John Mark Tucker (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 8.

¹⁶ Rothstein, 20.

Association (ALA) conference in 1913 for the “[incorporation] of knowledge of how to use a library with the subject matter included in a particular course,” so that the knowledge acquired would fall “naturally into its place in connection within definite concrete work.”¹⁷

This undercurrent of interest in the education of the library user gained more momentum as scholarship became increasingly specialized. The technical aspects of the library at this time gained prominence as vocational education programs started competing with the more traditional courses of study in the liberal arts.¹⁸ This specialization resulted in the colleges’ offering of courses, whether elective or for credit units, in library instruction. One of the more ambitious of such programs was the one launched in the 1930s by Louis Shores at Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. Shores advocated an innovative idea of a library college where all teachers would have training in library work, and would guide their undergraduate students in a self-directed course of study using appropriate library materials.¹⁹ This concept emphasized the undergraduate use of problem-solving techniques within the regular college curriculum.

Further attempts at developing innovative user instruction programs were made during the 1940s and the 1950s, but it was not until the 1960s that Patricia Knapp’s program at Monteith College at Wayne State University brought a sophisticated understanding of the library and bibliographic instruction to the forefront of the undergraduate experience. In 1966, Knapp introduced an “instruct the instructors” program in order to educate instructors on the uses of

¹⁷ Lucy M. Salmon, "Instruction in the Use of a College Library," in *User Instruction in Academic Libraries: A Century of Selected Readings*, ed. Larry L. Hardesty, John P. Schmitt, and John Mark Tucker (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 88.

¹⁸ Kalmbach: 28.

¹⁹ Louis Shores, "The Library Arts College," in *User Instruction in Academic Libraries: A Century of Selected Readings*, ed. Larry L. Hardesty, John P. Schmitt, and John Mark Tucker (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 121-130.

library resources and their educational value.²⁰ For the students, Knapp devised a plan of instruction that would integrate library use into the framework of a variety of courses across the curriculum. These instructions entailed assignments based on problem-solving activities devised to emphasize the process of research. Furthermore, the assignments entailed skills in using the library: locating call numbers and the ability to find books in the stacks, identification and ability to use essential reference works, and locating and evaluating information on diverse topics across disciplines.²¹ The most important aspects of this method of bibliographic instruction were the emphasis on multidisciplinary activities involving critical thinking in the evaluation of sources, as well as the importance of collaboration between instructors and librarians.

The experiences and successes of Knapp led to much interest in bibliographic instruction among academic librarians in the 1970s. This interest paved the way in the early 1970s for the creation within the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) of an ad hoc bibliographic committee, leading to the eventual creation of the Bibliographic Instruction Section of ACRL in 1977.²²

Also important in this period is the first mention of the term “information literacy” in library science and information literature in 1974. This term was first used by Paul G. Zurkowski in a document to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). In

²⁰ Nancy Pickering Thomas and Paula Kay Montgomery, *Information Literacy and Information Skills Instruction: Applying Research to Practice in the School Library Media Center*, Library and Information Problem-Solving Skills Series (Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1999), 10.

²¹ Patricia B. Knapp, "The Methodology and Results of the Monteith Pilot Project," in *User Instruction in Academic Libraries: A Century of Selected Readings*, ed. Larry L. Hardesty, John P. Schmitt, and John Mark Tucker (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1986), 167-188.

²² Thomas and Montgomery, 12.

this work Zurkowski suggests, “The top priority of [NCLIS] should be directed toward establishing a major national program to achieve universal information literacy by 1984.”²³

The Second Generation of Bibliographic Instruction

The academic librarians of the 1960s and 1970s in a sense had the role of instruction imposed upon them by the changing nature of higher education. In order to meet the needs of the increasing number of students, increasing diversity in students, and an ever increasing body of knowledge, academic librarians had begun to concern themselves less with library orientation tours and more with bibliographic instruction. These were changes that would continue dramatically into the years to come.

There were just seventy or so “wild eyed attendants” at the first Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX) conference of 1971, but their number grew exponentially within a decade.²⁴ Published in 1973, the first annual review of literature concerning bibliographic instruction contained only twenty-nine items. By the 1980s, however, each annual review contained an average of 140 to 150 items.²⁵ While these articles dealt with bibliographic instruction in all types of libraries, the majority of the items were concerned with university and college libraries. By the mid-1980s it was clear that bibliographic instruction had grown into a specialization.

From workshops on the use of the library it was just another step to teaching students to evaluate the information they found. This form of evaluation emphasized the element of critical

²³ Paul G. Zurkowski, *The Information Service Environment Relationships and Priorities. Related Paper No. 5* (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Nov. 1974), ERIC, ED 100391.

²⁴ Hannelore B. Rader, "From Library Orientation to Information Literacy: 20 Years of Hard Work," in *What Is Good Instruction Now? Library Instruction for the 90s*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1993), 25.

²⁵ Ibid.

thinking. This idea became an important theme in the literature of the 1980s. In describing educators, for example, Mona McCormick in 1983 wrote,

If we set goals which describe intellectual curiosity and critical thinking as values in an educated person, we have to figure out ways to move students toward these goals by giving them the experience of thinking while they are in an educational setting.²⁶

In showing students how to find books and journal articles, the question of relevancy, as well as biases and limitations in the works consulted, became topics of discussion as librarians encouraged students to think critically about the information they found.

Important also to this decade was the advent of the Internet, along with the increased awareness of the role of computing in the library. While much of the literature of the 1980s still emphasized the need to teach students the intricacies of the card catalog, one can witness the early articles on the student use of the computer in several key articles.²⁷

Another important event in the history of information literacy at the end of the decade was the creation of ALA's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy (1988). The role of the Committee was to investigate the effects of the information explosion on society, scholarship, and economy.

The Committee, consisting of education, library, and business leaders, issued a report in 1989 giving a definition to "information literacy" that is still in use today: "the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."²⁸ After stating "that no other change in

²⁶ Mona McCormick, "Critical Thinking and Library Instruction," *RQ* 22 (Summer 1983): 339.

²⁷ Marilyn Lary, "Education for the Community College Librarian," *Community & Junior College Libraries* 2, no. 3 (1984), Madison Mosley, "A Profile of the Library Learning Resources Center in Small Community/Junior Colleges," *College and Research Libraries* 45, no. 5 (Sept. 1984), David Voros, *Library Skills Workbook: Training for Self-Reliance in Basic Library Use* (1984), ERIC, ED 260718.

²⁸ American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, *Final Report* (American Library Association, January 10, 1989, accessed 20 Feb. 2004); available from <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/presidential.htm>.

American society has offered greater challenges than the emergence of the Information Age,” this report recommended the formation of a coalition of organizations dedicated to promoting information literacy.²⁹ As a response to these recommendations the National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL) was created in 1989.

Still under the leadership of Patricia Senn Breivik today, NFIL’s goals are to encourage “the creation and adoption of information literacy guidelines by such regulatory bodies as state departments of education, commissions on higher education, and academic governing boards;” to work “with teacher education programs to insure that new teachers are able to incorporate information literacy into their teaching”; to support, initiate, and monitor “information literacy projects both in the United States and abroad”; and to initiate dialogue among its diverse member organizations, forging a mutual objective within a large sector of educational, business, and governmental communities.³⁰

As the 1980s drew to an end, there was an ever-increasing amount of emphasis on the role of the librarian as closely intertwined with that of the instructor in teaching students how to understand, locate, and use the diverse resources available at the library. Furthermore, accountability in education basic skills and the decade of shrinking dollars brought about consequent revision in thinking about issues of academic librarianship and its role in instruction in the decade to come.³¹

The Growing Concept of Information Literacy

²⁹ National Forum on Information Literacy, *About the Forum*(25 July 2004, accessed 7 Feb. 2005); available from <http://www.infolit.org/about/index.html>.

³⁰ Ibid.(accessed).

³¹ Celia C. Suarez, "The Library and Remedial/Developmental Compensatory Education: A Case Study," *Library Trends* 33 (1985): 492.

The 1990s saw the development of two major trends. The first of these trends was the explosion of new information technologies which had started in the 1980s, but really began to take off exponentially in the 1990s. Due to the impact of such new technology, greater emphasis was placed on software evaluation and design, and there was more emphasis on technical literacy.³² Academic librarians were among the first to welcome experimental new information technology as valuable pedagogical tools in the field of student library instruction. This is the era that saw the development of library programs devoted to teaching the use of online catalogs and databases.³³ This period was the beginning of emphasis on such salient points as “site-based management,” “resource-based learning,” and a “quest for incorporation of new technologies” into the curriculum.³⁴

The second significant trend in information literacy to emerge from the 1990s was the push to integrate library instructional work with the existing courses at the institution, sharing scheduled class time, and collaborating with the faculty in specialty fields in order to weave the concept of information literacy into the course content. This was generally accomplished through the design of specific course materials that built upon the student’s knowledge and skills accumulated from term to term.

An excellent exemplar in the field of course-integrated instruction was the program developed in the early 1990s by Abigail Loomis and Patricia Herrling of the Steenbock Library, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In their program, Loomis and Herrling made a point of

³² Carol Tenopir, "Impact of Electronic Reference on Instruction and Reference," in *The Impact of Technology in Library Instruction*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1995), 1.

³³ Cheryl Blackwell, "Remote Access Opac Searching," in *The Impact of Technology in Library Instruction*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1995), 159.

³⁴ Sandra Duling and Patrick Max, "Teaching the Teachers in an Electronic Environment," in *The Impact of Technology in Library Instruction*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1995), 47, 48, 49.

differentiating between “course-related” instruction as opposed to “course-integrated” instruction.³⁵ The definition, admit the authors, was one of degree rather than kind.³⁶ The program listed a series of four criteria, three of which must be met in order to qualify as course-integrated:

- Faculty outside the library are involved in the design, execution, and evaluation of the program.
- The instruction is curriculum-based; in other words, it is directly related to the student’s course work and/or assignments.
- Students are required to participate.
- Students’ work is graded or credit is received for participation.³⁷

Similar formats were typically used by many instructional programs at academic libraries.

The important common thread running through most of the information literacy literature of the 1990s concerned technology use, as well as integration with existing courses. Different versions of the future were also discussed: the “doomsday” version where the ease and efficiency of electronic access in the library of the future made the librarian obsolete, as well as the more likely scenario in which librarians would play an important role in the twenty-first-century information environment.³⁸

Information Literacy in the Information Age

³⁵ Abigail Loomis and Patricia Herrling, “Course-Integrated Instruction-Pros and Cons,” in *What Is Good Instruction Now? Library Instruction for the 90s*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1993), 83.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Linda Shirato, “Preface,” in *What Is Good Instruction Now? Library Instruction for the 90s*, ed. Linda Shirato (Anne Arbor, MI: Learning Resources and Technologies, 1993), vi.

With a profusion of technology for the creation and dissemination of information, the role of preparing an information literate society, envisioned by Thomas Jefferson in the eighteenth century, still provides plenty of challenges for educators and librarians in the twenty-first century. One of the more important ideas that seems to be emerging from this new environment is that of multi-media information literacy. While the twentieth century saw the rise of the motion pictures, television, radio, and telephone, the printed word still carried the greatest amount of authority as a source for information.³⁹ The twenty-first century saw an explosion of multi-media tools for the creation and dissemination of information, including the Internet, intranets, Web-based reference sources, and cellular phones. As the ability to create and disseminate information in multi-media formats becomes more readily available, the need for multi-media information literacy greatly increases.

Hannelore Rader has identified the need for individuals to “achieve ‘information fluency’ by acquiring cultural, visual, computer, technology, research, and information management skills to enable them to think critically.”⁴⁰ Information fluency in this fluid environment involves new skills that will help to assist college students (and faculty) in making connections between the changing patterns of information creation and dissemination. Information fluency in this new light “gives a substance to information literacy that was never part of past pedagogies of library instruction.”⁴¹

Finally, released in the year 2000, ACRL’s “Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education” made it possible to measure students’ outcomes effectively using five

³⁹ Mary Sellen, “Information Literacy in the General Education: A New Requirement for the 21st Century,” *JGE* 51, no. 2 (2002): 119.

⁴⁰ Hannelore B. Rader, “Building Faculty-Librarian Partnerships to Prepare Students for Information Fluency: The Time for Sharing Information Expertise Is Now,” *College & Research Libraries News* 65, no. 2 (February 2004).

⁴¹ Ibid.

information skills standards, twenty-two performance indicators, and eighty-seven outcome measurements.⁴² Included among these indicators is the students' ability to locate, evaluate, organize, and use information for specific needs, using a variety of resources, in print, computerized, or in other forms and mediums; as well as the ability to think critically and communicate effectively.⁴³

Conclusion

Academic libraries are no longer mere repositories of knowledge. In helping students use the library actively and intelligently, librarians help create citizens with critical thinking skills that can not only survive, but can thrive in a world of information proliferation and a knowledge-based economy. The ongoing debates over the efficacy of bibliographic instruction and information literacy instruction notwithstanding, academic libraries have an extended influence as intellectual centers guiding users to become independent, life-long learners.

⁴² Association of College and Research Libraries and American Association of Junior Colleges, *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*(2000, accessed 17 May 2004); available from <http://www.acrl.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlinfo/it/informationliteracy.htm>.

⁴³ Rader, "Building Faculty-Librarian Partnerships to Prepare Students for Information Fluency: The Time for Sharing Information Expertise Is Now."

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF ACCREDITATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The development of higher education and the history of information literacy covered in the previous chapter run parallel to the rise of accreditation in the United States. This chapter will provide an overview of the development of regional accreditation. Following that will be a review of the literature concerned with accreditation standards, academic library evaluation, and information literacy.

Accreditation in the U.S.

Great fundamental changes in the structure of education in the United States took place at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ With a proliferation of research in the sciences the groundwork was set for the rapid rise and expansion of academic institutions at all levels. In this new environment faculty researchers, increasingly concerned with specialized investigations, could no longer perform administrative tasks such as admissions. The growing complexity in higher education institutions created a need for consistency and congruity, and bureaucratic administration and standardized practices started to come into being.

Confusion in the articulation of a definition for secondary schools, lack of agreement as to appropriate preparatory subjects for college admission, and a lack of uniform college entrance requirements, led in 1890 to a movement to “accredit” all institutions meeting minimal standards.⁴⁵ Born in an age of reform, and characterized by a society that was distrustful of

⁴⁴ See previous chapter for a more comprehensive discussion of the changes in higher education during this era.

⁴⁵ Goldin and Katz: 312-313.

government and believed in individual values and voluntary collective action, the accreditation movement grew into a major force by the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

Historical Development of Accreditation

Three distinct periods may be defined to provide a historical framework for the review of the development of accreditation in the United States:

- 1787-1913: beginning with the early roots of institutional and programmatic accreditation;
- 1913-1975: beginning with the establishment of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the establishment of accrediting standards by three other regional accrediting agencies, and attempts at national organization;
- 1975-present: the creation of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), reforms and new models of quality initiatives, and an increased criticism of accreditation.

First Period of Accreditation: 1787-1913

Accreditation has several beginnings, but there is some agreement that the current system formed its structure in 1787 when the University of the State of New York was reorganized to have its own board of regents, and empowered, and required to make yearly visits to every college in the state for the purpose of review and registration of curriculum.⁴⁷ Nearly a century passed, however, before regional accreditation first came into being. This time the drive for accreditation came from a group of secondary school officials who sought to make the process of college admission more efficient by accrediting high schools in their region, assuring graduates'

⁴⁶ Kenneth E. Young, "Prologue: The Changing Scope of Accreditation," in *Understanding Accreditation*, ed. Kenneth E. Young, Charles M. Chambers, and H.R. Kells and associates with the assistance of Ruth Cargo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1983), 6.

⁴⁷ Fred F. Harclerode, *Accreditation: History, Process, and Problems* (Washington D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1980), 2, 20.

admission into postsecondary institutions by providing them with the appropriate preparatory subjects.

Accreditation of postsecondary institutions began in embryonic form when the North Central Association (NCA), having accredited high schools since 1905, drew up standards for higher education institutions in 1909. Four years later NCA released the first ever list of accredited postsecondary institutions in the United States.

At the same time that regional institutional accreditation was developing, another system of accreditation was also emerging in order to recognize professional schools and programs that were taking the place of the informal apprenticeship programs of the past. The goal of this type of accreditation was to ensure educational preparation for licensure exams and to engage the professional and academic communities in a dialogue in order to come up with proper standards. Unfortunately, the system became problematic as programs began to subdivide and specialize, and a proliferation of new accrediting agencies began to battle it out for prestige and resources on the campus. The result was a push to create some sort of an organization with the power to apply standards nationally.

Second Period of Accreditation: 1913-1975

The North Central Association,⁴⁸ having led the way in the establishment of set standards for accreditation (1913), once again broke new ground in 1929 by appointing a Committee on Revision of Standards. The Committee developed a research project that resulted in the development of a principle in which diversity and individuality among institutions of higher

⁴⁸ NCA accredits institutions in 19 states: Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

education was acknowledged. Institutions were no longer evaluated in terms of arbitrary standards, but were evaluated in the light of their own defined purpose (their stated mission and goals, for example). This principle was eventually adopted by the other regional accrediting agencies, and led to the system based on self-evaluation and self-regulation which to this day is a major component of the accreditation process.⁴⁹

Starting from 1921, in an attempt to curb the ever-expanding number and influence of specialized and programmatic accreditation agencies, a series of committees, commissions, and councils were formed. None of these organizations succeeded in their attempts to stop the proliferation of the specialized accrediting bodies.

Perhaps the most significant development in this era was the increasing involvement of the federal government in accreditation. Because the federal government was now one of the largest providers of student financial aid, a federal listing of institutions eligible for funding became a major factor in accreditation. Concern began to grow in the voluntary accreditation community as to how far the federal government would go in taking over the role accreditation. The accelerating federal activity in accreditation, coupled with the failures in curbing the growth of specialized accrediting agencies, provided the impetus for the formation of a new national organization: the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA).

Third Period of Accreditation: 1975-Present

⁴⁹ Young, 7.

Soon after its formation in 1975, COPA set some major priorities, one of which was “Evaluating educational quality, including the measurement of outcomes.”⁵⁰ COPA addressed the relationship between accreditation and outcomes assessment in a study completed in 1978, stating that accrediting agencies should require that institutions articulate “goals and objectives that are sufficiently explicit to be assessable”; “apply performance criteria that [...] assure graduates of competence in the area for which they are being prepared”; and “employ effective instruments to assess student attainments.”⁵¹ COPA never moved assertively in seeking compliance to these recommendations, but the call for outcomes assessment became more pervasive with time, developing into the recent regional accrediting agencies’ focus on results rather than processes.

As the role of the federal government continued to increase in higher education COPA grew less and less effective in fulfilling its role and was dissolved in 1993. Another series of committees and councils followed the demise of COPA, leading to the Council for Higher Education (CHEA). CHEA continues to this day to lobby for the autonomy of institutions of higher education from state and federal government regulation.⁵²

Accreditation and Evaluation of Academic Libraries

⁵⁰ Kenneth E. Young, "Council on Postsecondary Accreditation," in *Understanding Accreditation*, ed. Kenneth E. Young, Charles M. Chambers, and H.R. Kells and associates with the assistance of Ruth Cargo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1983), 302.

⁵¹ As quoted in Grover J. Andrews, "Adapting Accreditation to New Clientele," in *Understanding Accreditation*, ed. Kenneth E. Young, Charles M. Chambers, and H.R. Kells and associates with the assistance of Ruth Cargo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1983), 349.

⁵² Council for Higher Education Accreditation, *CHEA at a Glance*(accessed 3 Feb. 2005); available from http://www.chea.org/pdf/chea_glance_2003.pdf.

Historically, regional accreditation agencies have required the submission of data on academic libraries. In the first period of accreditation, most agencies' standards included quantitative measures such as the number of books in the library's collections, the physical size of the library, or the staff size. In its second period, accreditation began to move from a quantitative to a qualitative approach that concerned broader educational issues. Libraries also began around the same time to develop measures and collect statistics related to library services. In the third period, regional accreditation agencies began to ask for articulated outcomes and outcomes assessment. At the same time academic libraries found that they could no longer depend on simply gathering data on the services they provided, but instead were expected to demonstrate performance in order to justify their budget requests to their local administration. It now became imperative that libraries connect statistical data to outcomes to show the library's contribution to student learning and other institutional goals.⁵³

Table 3
The Changing Nature of Information and Focus of Standards on Academic Libraries in Different Periods of Accreditation⁵⁴

Period	Nature of Information	Focus of Standards	Library Measures
First Period	Static	Collections	Input; Quantitative
Second Period	Static/ Dynamic	Access	Input/Output; Quantitative/Qualitative
Third Period	Static/ Dynamic	Use/Learning Outcomes	Input/Output/Outcomes; Quantitative/Qualitative

⁵³ Bruce T. Fraser and Charles R. McClure, *Toward a Framework of Library and Institutional Outcomes* (Tallahassee, FL: Information Use Management and Policy Institute, and the Association of Research Libraries E-Metrics Project, Jan. 2002), 2.

⁵⁴ Based on Ralph A. Wolff and Mimi Harris Steadman, "Accreditation Expectations in the Age of New Technology," in *The Challenge and Practice of Academic Accreditation*, ed. Edward D. Garten (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 13.

The rest of this chapter will provide a review of selected literature concerned with performance criteria, measures, and evaluation of academic libraries, and the connection of the library to institutional outcomes like student success and faculty productivity. Furthermore, relevant works that relate regional accrediting agencies' standards to library performance measures and to information literacy will be covered.

Literature Review

In his 1959 Ph.D. dissertation, Alan D. Covey gave an analysis of the standards set by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and those set by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). Covey's conclusions were that combining both quantitative and qualitative measures, evaluating the quality of the library building and collections, and evaluating the role of the librarian within the academic community, made for the most useful standards.⁵⁵

In the 1960s, one of the more influential works on library evaluation was Philip M. Morse's *Library Effectiveness: A Systems Approach* (1968).⁵⁶ This treatise was largely

⁵⁵ As summarized by Delmus E. Williams and Phyllis O'Connor, "Academic Libraries and the Literature of Accreditation," in *The Challenge and Practice of Academic Accreditation*, ed. Edward D. Garten (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 248-249.

⁵⁶ Philip McCord Morse, *Library Effectiveness: A Systems Approach* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968).

concerned with quantitative measures like the statistical measures of book availability and book obsolescence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Science Library.⁵⁷

In the literature of the early 1970s, the library tended to be viewed as goods-oriented rather than service-oriented. Still concerned with input measures, much of this literature placed library “quality” in terms of cost, response time, or cost/benefit ratios.⁵⁸ Furthermore, libraries were viewed as isolated entities and not placed within their institutional context.⁵⁹ By the late 1970s, however, there was a widening scope on the interpretation of performance measurement, focusing especially on measures of actual service.⁶⁰ Literature from this period relates the conviction that, in contrast to the prevailing methods of statistical analyses of monetary inputs and circulation numbers, library performance measures should focus more on the dynamics of user behavior.⁶¹

In 1980, Blagden provided a review of approaches and problems associated with library performance assessment.⁶² Blagden called attention to the fact that none of the approaches “appeared to give any indication as to how effective libraries are in transferring knowledge.”⁶³

⁵⁷ Deborah L. Goodall, "Performance Measurement: A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Librarianship* 20, no. 2 (April 1998): 128.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 129.

⁵⁹ For example, see Ching-Chih Chen, *Quantitative Measurement and Dynamic Library Service* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1978).

⁶⁰ For example, see Robert W. Burns, "Library Use as a Performance Measure: Its Background and Rationale," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 4, no. 1 (March 1978), Douglas L. Zweizig, "Measuring Library Use," *Drexel Library Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (July 1977).

⁶¹ Goodall: 131.

⁶² John Blagden, *Do We Really Need Libraries?: An Assessment of Approaches to the Evaluation of the Performance of Libraries* (New York: K. G. Saur, 1980), 8.

⁶³ Ibid., 144.

Blagden's conclusion called for "developing a methodology by which the performance of a library can be more effectively assessed."⁶⁴

Academic libraries were generally not unhappy when it came to accreditation standards in the early 1980s. George Calvin Grant, in fact, found that most academic librarians in the Middle States region were comfortable with the criteria and processes used by the Commission on Higher Education to evaluate library effectiveness.⁶⁵ The standards regarding libraries were for the most part specific and provided concrete means for gathering data for evaluation. The academic library could use the data to request funding for its programs from the institution. But the 1980s was a decade of radical change in the manner in which regional accrediting agencies looked at institutions and their programs.

By the mid-1980s the topic of outcomes assessment had taken center stage in higher education. Fueled by state mandates, greater attention was now paid to what students should learn, how they learned it, and measurements of how much learning was taking place. According to Theodore Marchese of the American Association for Higher Education, some forty states had begun to ask their public institutions for assessment of student learning outcomes; and by 1988, all accrediting agencies included some form of outcomes assessment or evidence of institutional effectiveness as part of their institutional and programmatic reviews.⁶⁶

The regional accreditation agencies' view of academic libraries, however, did not seem to have the same outcomes emphasis. Mary F. Casserly's 1986 examination of self-study reports from four academic libraries found that the reports did not typically address library outputs,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 146.

⁶⁵ George Calvin Grant, "Attitudes of Higher Education Library Administrators toward Adequacy of Middle States Association Library Evaluation Criteria and Processes" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1982).

⁶⁶ Theodore J. Marchese, "Introduction," *NCA Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 371.

relying rather on evaluation based on inputs and processes. Casserly suggested that the accrediting agencies “develop guidelines or standards that provide more guidance to libraries,” assisting librarians in applying more appropriate performance measures.⁶⁷

By the late 1980s, Antoinette M. Kania (1988) found a general sense of dissatisfaction expressed by librarians, both with the regional accrediting agencies’ and the ACRL standards for academic libraries. Kania found that the regional agencies’ standards referring to libraries were focused most on inputs and processes with scant emphasis on outcomes. Kania identified library performance measures and developed a composite set of regional accreditation library standards that emphasized outcomes.⁶⁸

Delmus E. Williams (1988) examined the way accreditation as practiced by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) should be applied to the university in general and the library in particular. Williams showed how decision making within the library could be provided with a fresh view if accreditation was seen as a facilitator of change, and how academic libraries might use accreditation as a tool for continuing evaluation and improvement.⁶⁹

In 1990, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education held a workshop on evaluation of bibliographic instruction programs. The events at this workshop were summarized by Marilyn Lutzker, who alerted academic libraries to the accrediting agency’s increased emphasis on the role the library plays in educational effectiveness in the accreditation process. The Middle States Commission’s perspective, as put forth by Lutzker, was that the library should

⁶⁷ Mary F. Casserly, "Academic Library Regional Accreditation," *College & Research Libraries* 47, no. 1 (Jan. 1986): 46.

⁶⁸ Antoinette M. Kania, "Academic Library Standards and Performance Measures," *College & Research Libraries* 49, no. 1 (Jan. 1988): 16, 20.

⁶⁹ Delmus E. Williams, "Accreditation and the Process of Change in Academic Libraries," in *Advances in Library Administration and Organization*, ed. Gerard B. McCabe and Bernard Kreissman (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1988), 198, 204-205.

be “a vital part of the institution’s teaching/learning process,” and that “the bibliographic instruction program is indeed viewed as one means of improving academic quality.”⁷⁰

Howard Simmons (1994) addressed the variety of campus constituencies whose involvements are key in designing effective information literacy programs, and made observations about what steps educators and information professionals might take collaboratively to address the concerns for information literacy, all within the context of accreditation. Simmons concluded that institutions need to broaden their view of information literacy beyond its connection to bibliographic instruction, and that the regional accrediting agencies need to encourage institutions to “view information literacy and other resource-based programs as essential elements in assessing quality, student learning outcomes, and institutional effectiveness.”⁷¹

Another such view from the mid-1990s was that of the executive director of the Senior Colleges and Universities Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), Ralph A. Wolff (1995), who called for more attention to the academic development of students through information literacy instruction. Wolff stipulated that “assessment should be directed primarily at the library’s relationship to the teaching and learning functions of the institution.”⁷²

Sarah Pritchard (1996) reasoned that,

⁷⁰ Marilyn Lutzker, "Bibliographic Instructions and Accreditation in Higher Education," *College & Research Libraries News* 51, no. 1 (Jan. 1990): 16.

⁷¹ Howard L. Simmons, "The Concern for Information Literacy: A Major Challenge for Accreditation," in *The Challenge and Practice of Academic Librarianship*, ed. Edward D. Garten (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 93-94.

⁷² Ralph A. Wolff, "Using the Accreditation Process to Transform the Mission of the Library," *New Directions for Higher Education* 90 (Summer 1995): 90.

Academic library quality must be defined to fit local programs, yet it must also incorporate the contribution to the higher education system, which lends itself to being defined in terms of regional and national frameworks.⁷³

Considering the lack of methods for academic librarians to assess library-related outcomes and contributions to the educational and research goals of the campus, Pritchard proposed a Total Quality Management approach.

With the growing focus on outcomes assessment in higher education, the ACRL Board of Directors started to become concerned in the mid-1990s with the Association's lack of a statement on the subject, and that "its standards, largely written as input measures, [were] out of step with the practices and philosophy of regional and professional accrediting agencies and state higher education agencies."⁷⁴ The Board approved appointments to the Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment, charging it, among other things, with, "[developing] a philosophical framework for assessing libraries in terms of desired campus outcomes."⁷⁵ Among its conclusions, the Task Force linked the principles of outcomes assessments for academic libraries to institutional effectiveness and the process of accreditation, reporting that, "because assessment is strongly linked to planning, both in accreditation requirements and in practical usefulness, assessments should be designed to provide information that can be used to improve services."⁷⁶

⁷³ Sarah M. Pritchard, "Determining the Quality in Academic Libraries," *Library Trends* 44, no. 3 (Winter 1996): 573.

⁷⁴ Association of College and Research Libraries, *Task Force on Academic Library Outcomes Assessment Report* (27 June 1998, accessed 8 Feb. 2005); available from <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/taskforceacademic.htm>.

⁷⁵ Ibid.(accessed).

⁷⁶ Ibid.(accessed).

Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer (1998) advocated the campus-wide perspective, maintaining that, “the assessment of library performance should be defined and shaped by its connections and contributions to institutional goals and desired educational outcomes.”⁷⁷ Gratch-Lindauer found “some useful suggestions from accreditation, outcomes assessment, and academic library effectiveness publications on how to assess the impact of libraries,” but a general lack in the “identification of a more comprehensive set of performance indicators linked to valued higher education outcomes.”⁷⁸

Thus motivated, Gratch-Lindauer connected assessment efforts to the teaching/learning role of the library and information literacy, and identified specific assessment domains and performance indicators to document the library’s contribution to institutional vitality.

The changes in the social and political structures that took place in the 1990s had an impact on higher education and the practice of accreditation. Some of these changes had to do with the increasing complexity in technology and educational delivery systems; other changes had to do with the regional agencies’ response to the ever-increasing public demand for quality assurance in higher education. Much of the literature of the 2000s dealing with accreditation standards and academic libraries concerns the issues and trends that resulted from these changes.

Prudence W. Dalrymple (2001) found that the increase in virtual universities and distant education “underscored the need for thoughtful and informed librarian participation in both the setting of standards and the review process on both the institutional and programmatic levels” of accreditation.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer, “Defining and Measuring the Library’s Impact on Campuswide Outcomes,” *College & Research Libraries* 59, no. 6 (1998): 547.

⁷⁸ Ibid.: 551.

⁷⁹ Prudence W. Dalrymple, “Understanding Accreditation: The Librarian’s Role in Educational Evaluation,” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 1, no. 1 (2001): 26.

Writing in 2002, Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer provided an analysis of the standards put out by the regional accrediting agencies' commissions on higher education. Gratch-Lindauer identified overall trends among which was an emphasis on outcomes assessment and information literacy. Among her concluding observations, Gratch-Lindauer asserted that,

Probably the most direct contribution the library makes to institutional goals is its role in developing clear student learning objectives for information literacy skills; assessing the progress and achievement of those objectives; and showing how outcomes are used to improve student learning.⁸⁰

Ronald L. Baker (2002) outlined the regional accrediting agencies' attempts at fostering quality improvement in higher education, focusing on the way the Northwest Commission on Schools and Colleges had revised its standards on library and information resources in order to suit recent advances in technology and delivery systems.⁸¹

Gary B. Thompson (2002) observed that many of the regional accreditation agencies required the incorporation of information literacy into the general education curriculum. Thompson concluded that accreditation standards for information literacy have the potential to encourage educational reform using integrative and holistic approaches, especially with faculty and librarian collaboration.⁸²

In general, the literature of the twenty-first century reflects the view that for the purposes of accreditation, and to improve educational quality and student development, the academic library needs to place itself within the context of the institution to which it belongs.

⁸⁰ Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer, "Comparing the Regional Accreditation Standards: Outcomes Assessment and Other Trends," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28 (2002): 19.

⁸¹ Ronald L Baker, "Evaluating Quality and Effectiveness: Regional Accreditation Principles and Practices," *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 28, no. 1/2 (2002).

⁸² Gary B. Thompson, "Information Literacy Accreditation Mandates: What They Mean for Faculty and Librarians," *Library Trends* 51, no. 2 (2002).

Measurements of library effectiveness in general and information literacy in particular need to be done within the context of institutional mission and goals.

Conclusion

When the regional accrediting agencies first came into being around a century ago, their main concern was to provide a definition for what was considered a secondary or a postsecondary institution, with the goal of determining proper standards for college admission. The main beneficiaries of these goals were the institutions of higher learning. Later, while keeping an eye on coordination at the national level, the regional agencies sought to provide funding benefits for their institutions while at the same time protecting them from competition by unaccredited institutions. Eventually, mounting pressures for greater accountability in higher education caused the reformed agencies to begin measurements of educational quality among member institutions.

The focus of accreditation standards that have to do with libraries and library-related data reflects the changes in the nature of information and library/user interaction (see table 3). The general trend has been for the standards to include more and more qualitative expectations along with quantitative ones, and to move from input measures toward output and outcome measures.

The following chapters will provide a more detailed look at the relevant documentation of the regional accrediting agencies and their current outlook on academic libraries, information literacy, and outcomes assessment.

CHAPTER 3: MIDDLE STATES ASSOCIATION

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools has member institutions in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other locations overseas. Currently, the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle State Association has 500 members and twenty-five candidate institutions.⁸³

The Commission's latest eligibility requirements and standards for accreditation can be found in *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (revised 2002, editorial changes in 2004). One such "characteristic of excellence," as implied by its inclusion in the agency's document, is information literacy.⁸⁴

In the document, each of the fourteen Standards is first concisely expressed in bold type, and then followed by the "Context" section, where narrative text is utilized to deal with the topic, context, values, and definitions of the Standard. "Fundamental Elements" are next, specifying characteristics and qualities expected of institutions. Finally, the "Optional Analysis and Evidence" section of each Standard provides additional examples of analyses that are not required, but that might help institutions in their self-study process. *Characteristics of Excellence* contains a table of contents, an introduction, and an index.

The document makes thirteen references to "information literacy"; fifteen references to "library," or "libraries"; eleven references to "information resources"; twenty-three reference to

⁸³ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, (2005, accessed 7 April 2005); available from <http://www.msche.org/>.

⁸⁴ Edward D. Garten, "Current Regional Commission Standards and Guidelines," in *The Challenge and Practice of Academic Accreditation*, ed. Edward D. Garten (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994).

“learning outcomes”; and 144 references to “assessment.” Of the fourteen Standards in the document, seven concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

Standard 1 (Missions, Goals, and Objectives) begins the document, stating:

Institutional objectives are outcomes-based and capable of being evaluated, and institutional assessment provides a mechanism for on-going review and refinement of goals. Educational goals and objectives particularly should be stated in terms of the outcomes they seek to achieve (e.g., the academic and personal changes and/or competencies the institution seeks to foster in its students).⁸⁵

Right from the start the Commission has set its focus on student learning and the institutions’ ability to use evaluation and assessment as a means to improve institutional performance. By connecting institutional mission with outcomes assessment, the Commission intends to provide a positive effect on student development through accreditation and institutional dynamics.

Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) brings the previous issue of objectives and assessment to bear on the resources offered by institutions (with a tacit implication for libraries and library resources), stating:

Measures of efficiency and effectiveness, supported by quantitative and/or qualitative analyses related to mission and goals, may prove useful in the planning process. They may be among the significant types of information to be reported, at the system or institutional level as appropriate, in initial and continuing self-assessment and peer review for accreditation.⁸⁶

The implication for libraries and their resources continues in the “Optional Analysis of Evidence” section of Standard 3, where the Commission adds that accreditation may be

⁸⁵ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation* (Philadelphia, PA: Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2004), 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 7.

facilitated by “evidence of cooperative agreements for inter-institutional collaboration and resource sharing; and analyses of any resulting efficiencies and impact on student achievement of academic goals.”⁸⁷ Collaboration between departments, including the library, is highly encouraged, although evidence of this is not required by the Commission.

Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment) reiterates and expands on Middle States’ expectation that its institutions provide evidence of student learning (and other outcomes). Here, however, the Commission makes it clear that its objective is not for institutions to adhere blindly to standardized goals; rather, the idea is to foster good practice through quality standards:

While the Commission expects institutions to engage in outcomes assessment, it does not prescribe a specific approach or methodology. The approach and methodology to be employed are institutional prerogatives and may vary, based on the stated mission, goals, objectives and resources of the institution. Nevertheless, an institution engaged in self-study or periodic review should provide evidence that the assessment of outcomes, particularly learning outcomes, is an ongoing institutional activity.⁸⁸

The language used here indicates that although the Commission places great emphasis in the importance of outcomes assessment, it nevertheless intends its policies to be, by design, not prescriptive in nature, hence preserving the autonomy and diversity of its individual institutions.

In the “Fundamental Elements” section of Standard 7, an accredited institution is said to be characterized as one that has written assessment plans and policies on criteria such as,

- periodic assessment of institutional effectiveness that addresses the total range of educational offerings, services, and processes, including [...] institutional resources [...] and student learning outcomes;
- systematic and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures, which maximize the use of existing data and information.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 22.

As evidenced a bit later in the document, the “total range of education offerings” includes information literacy as part of the curriculum, and the library is considered as an important “institutional resources.” In addition, the “Optional Analysis and Evidence” section of the Standard holds implications for the library in its call for the “analysis of student satisfaction survey results.”⁹⁰

Giving keen significance to information literacy in particular, Standard 11 (Educational Offerings) provides a definition of information literacy and declares:

Information literacy is vital to all disciplines and to effective teaching and learning in any institution. Institutions of higher education need to provide students and instructors with the knowledge, skills, and tools to obtain information in many formats and media in order to identify, retrieve, and apply relevant and valid knowledge and information resources to their study, teaching, or research.⁹¹

The language used in this statement is noteworthy in that information literacy is understood as a cross-disciplinary concept; and the use of the phrase “need to provide” makes it clear that it is essential for institutions to impart these “vital” skills to both their students and their faculty.

Making the strongest case for information literacy and the role librarians might play, Standard 11 goes on to assert the “essential” role of library resources and librarians “not only in their support of information literacy, but also in the development and implementation of other relevant academic activities.”⁹² Similarly, the “Fundamental Elements of Educational Offerings” related to this Standard include the need for institutions to document “collaboration between

⁹⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁹¹ Ibid., 32.

⁹² Ibid., 33.

professional library staff and faculty in teaching and fostering information literacy skills relevant to the curriculum.”⁹³ And though not required, it is recommended that institutions opt to provide:

- evidence of information literacy incorporated in the curriculum with syllabi, or other material appropriate to the mode of teaching and learning, describing expectations for students’ demonstration of information literacy skills;
- assessment of information literacy outcomes, including assessment of related learner abilities.⁹⁴

Here, once again the language describing desired elements shows inherent evidence of the significance of collaboration between faculty and librarians in information literacy instruction, and the value of assessing the competencies related to such instruction.

Standard 12 (General Education) makes another strong case for information literacy. Here, Middles States brings in concepts often related to information literacy: “The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including [...] critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.”⁹⁵ Technological competency implies instruction and learning in the use of electronic resources, a mainstay of most undergraduate libraries; and critical analysis refers to the skills necessary to adapt to the ever-changing information environment, and to think critically about the way information is organized and transmitted in the modern age of information, so that students can be drawn “into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and sensitivity, and

⁹³ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 36.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 37.

preparing them to make enlightened judgments outside as well as within their academic specialty.”⁹⁶

The “Fundamental Elements” section of Standard 12 conveys that:

an accredited institution is characterized by [...] general education requirements assuring that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, technological capabilities appropriate to the discipline, and information literacy, which includes critical analysis and reasoning;⁹⁷

And the section further stresses the importance of outcomes assessment for this concept, emphasizing the Commission’s expectations for:

assessment of general education outcomes within the institution’s overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.⁹⁸

Along with other major areas of knowledge, then, Middle States views information literacy as an integral component of undergraduate general education. Furthermore, an expansion on the concept here places critical reasoning within the domain of information literacy. Broadly stated, this section of the document characterizes information literacy as a method of teaching students to learn how to learn.

Standard 13 (Related Educational Activities), in relation to distant education, includes in its “Optional Analysis and Evidence” the desirability of presenting “how the institution assures that students and faculty have sufficient technological and information literacy skills to access and to use effectively the information resources available at a distance”;⁹⁹ and “evidence that the accredited institution reviews and approves work performed by [...] instructional support

⁹⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 47.

resources (including library/information resources), evaluation of student work, and outcomes assessment.”¹⁰⁰

Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning) brings another clear iteration of the importance of the relationship Middle States sees between outcomes assessment and student learning:

While not all of the impact of an institution on its students can be readily measured, the assessment of student learning is essential whatever the nature of the institution, its particular mission, the types of programs it offers, or the manner in which its educational programs are delivered and student learning facilitated.¹⁰¹

Bringing the document full circle to the concepts stated in Standard 1, this final Standard once again distinguishes the connection the Commission perceives between learning goals for students, mission and goals of the institution, and the institution’s curricular offerings.

Concluding Discussion on Middle States

Middle States’ definition and main discussion about information literacy comes in the Context section of Standard 11, within the context of “Educational Offerings,” where it is discussed in terms of learning outcomes. After defining information literacy, the Commission articulates seven elements of information literacy:

1. Determining the nature and extent of needed information.
2. Accessing information effectively and efficiently.
3. Evaluating critically information and its sources.
4. Incorporating selected information in the learner’s knowledge base and value system.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 50.

5. Using information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.
6. Understanding the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology.
7. Observing laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information.

These elements fit perfectly within Middle States' vision of an information literacy program that runs across all disciplines, involves collaboration between faculty and librarians, and requires evidence of student learning provided through learning outcomes and assessment.

Middle States views information literacy as a “metacognitive strategy” that “applies to anyone, learning anything, anywhere, and at any time.”¹⁰² The term “metacognition” refers to individuals’ ability to think about their own thinking and to become self-motivated learners.¹⁰³

Although Middle States never prescribes methods of developing information literacy, or requires an independent assessment tool with the information literacy label, the general trends in the language of the text suggest the eventual institutional goal of integration and distribution of information literacy throughout the general education curriculum. Assessment data can then be collected at the institutional, program, or course level, through quantitative and qualitative sources, as well as direct and indirect measures of demonstrated competencies. This model of information literacy instruction provides opportunities for partnerships between librarians and faculty, engaging both parties in the discussion of curriculum development and content.

Given the vision set by Middle States, higher learning institutions requesting accreditation in this region will need to adapt to the evolving concept of information literacy.

¹⁰² Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Developing Research & Communication Skills: Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum: Executive Summary*(Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2003, accessed 4 Jan. 2005); available from http://www.msache.org/msache/content/pdf_files/devskill.pdf.

¹⁰³ System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES), *Glossary of Useful Terms*(SABES, 2003, accessed 17 Jan. 2005); available from <http://www.sabes.org/assessment/glossary.htm>.

Institutions can achieve this objective by first reviewing their institutional goals set for student learning. Next, they will need to address the first stages of information literacy: identifying the need for information, locating it, and evaluating its source. At this basic level, information literacy instruction usually takes the form of a stand-alone course. If the institution is at this stage of information literacy implementation, it will need to ensure that information literacy courses are part of an overall, coherent general education curriculum that consists of many complementary components. Eventually, the final goal is for institutions to transition to the integrated model of information literacy, with various disciplines and co-curricular programs addressing a core set of information literacy competencies. This final stage deepens the students' understanding of the way knowledge is produced, organized, and distributed; and creates an atmosphere of collaboration between librarians and faculty. Finally, all Middle States institutions need to place the characteristics of their information literacy programs within the framework of strategic, operational, and assessment plans.¹⁰⁴ These assessments must then be considered in estimating student learning, program improvement, and satisfying the institution's need for accountability.

¹⁰⁴ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Developing Research & Communication Skills: Guidelines for Information Literacy in the Curriculum: Executive Summary*(accessed).

CHAPTER 4: NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION

New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Within the six New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont), 218 colleges and universities are accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The Standards in use by CIHE at the time of this publication were adopted in 1992, with slight revisions made in 2001. According to its Web site, however, “as specified by its policy and in light of the continuing changes in higher education and public expectation for accreditation,” CIHE began in the spring of 2003 to undertake a comprehensive revision and update of its Standards.¹⁰⁵ The Commission will complete this process in 2005 and begin to apply the new Standards by 2006.

At present, CIHE provides accreditation to colleges and universities with programs that grant baccalaureate or higher degrees, or to institutions that grant the associate’s degree but include degree programs in the liberal arts or general studies. Another commission within NEASC, the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), provides accreditation to postsecondary institutions whose mission is career and technical in nature, including non-degree, associate degree, and baccalaureate degree granting institutions. The NEASC Board of Trustees, however, has decided that all degree-granting institutions in the region should fall under the purview of a single commission. By 2008, therefore, all degree granting institutions currently accredited by CTCI will change their affiliation to CIHE. Recognizing the somewhat different

¹⁰⁵ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Revising the Standards for Accreditation* (accessed 22 Dec. 2004); available from http://www.neasc.org/cihe/revisions/standards_revision.htm.

goals of institutions whose mission is career and technical in nature, and amending the revised Standards to accommodate these institutions will be an important task ahead of CIHE.

Observations based on the text of the Standards currently in use by CIHE are presented here first. Following this section will be findings based on the text in the draft Standards for 2006, and a comparison between the two versions in order to reveal a sense of change. After that comes a discussion of these changes and how they concern the current educational environment, academic libraries, and information literacy.

Current Standards (1992; rev. 2001)

The eleven Standards within CIHE's *Standards for Accreditation* are simply named according to their content and followed by a set of numbered subheadings. There is a "Preamble" section which serves as an introduction, but no table of contents and no index is included.

The document contains one reference to "information literacy"; a total of eleven references to "library," or "libraries"; nine references to "information resources"; one reference to "learning outcomes"; and two references to "assessment." Of the eleven Standards in the document, five concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

The fourth and final subheading of Standard 1 (Mission and Purposes) makes a vague reference to institutional assessment, stating:

Drawing upon its ongoing efforts to assess its effectiveness, the institution periodically re-evaluates the content and pertinence of its statement of mission and purposes. The results are regularly used in planning and resource allocation to enhance its efforts to achieve institutional purposes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Standards for Accreditation* (Bedford, MA: NEASC/CIHE, 2001), 3.

The concept of institutional effectiveness addressed here is somewhat expanded upon in Standard 2 (Planning and Evaluation), subheading 5, which specifies, “the institution systematically applies information obtained through its evaluation activities to inform institutional planning, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness especially as it relates to student achievement.”¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, there is no further guidance in this Standard on possible definitions of “institutional effectiveness,”¹⁰⁸ and there is no expressed expectation that institutions need in any way to demonstrate evidence of implementation of plans to promote such effectiveness.

Standard 4 (Programs and Instruction) contains several subheadings that, while making no reference to information literacy, and only one reference to libraries, should still be of interest to information literacy librarians. Subheading 4.3 begins with a general expectation of outcomes for college graduates, including “the knowledge, intellectual skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired,” and “creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career preparation practices to be mastered.”¹⁰⁹ These goals can be defined as competencies that information literacy, cutting across specific disciplines, incorporates.

Subheading 4.8, dealing with distance learning, brings in the issue of access to “special delivery systems (such as computers [...])”; and subheading 4.9 touches on the issue of the use of “library resources” by students.¹¹⁰ Subheading 4.14 makes the closest declaration to what might be considered information literacy, maintaining, “all undergraduate programs require the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁸ There is, however, a *See Commission Policy on Institutional Effectiveness* reference.

¹⁰⁹ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Standards for Accreditation*, 7.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

use of information resources in addition to course texts and formal instruction.”¹¹¹ Subheading 4.19 brings in other concepts familiar to information literacy: “Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence [in] critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning.”¹¹² Scattered through Standard 4, then, are topics that relate to student learning objectives, library resources, critical thinking skills, and lifelong learning. Here, faculty are given a substantive voice in curriculum design and execution. Evaluation based on objectives and outcomes assessment is specifically called for to provide evidence of effectiveness, improvement, and continued need.¹¹³ There is, however, no specific formula given for measuring effectiveness.

Standard 6 (Student Services) again modestly touches upon readily accessible technology to distance learners, as well as the requisite that “the institution systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its student population and then makes provision for responding to them. It assists students to resolve educational and technological problems [...].”¹¹⁴ Literacy in the use of technology is one of the domains of library instruction.

But more interesting is Standard 7 (Library and Information Resources), where there is further matter of concern to information literacy instruction, library resources, and outcomes assessment. Subheading 7.1 begins this Standard, stating explicitly, “the institution makes available the library and information resources necessary for the fulfillment of its mission and purposes; [and] the institution ensures that students use these resources as an integral part of their

¹¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹¹² Ibid., 10.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 17.

education.”¹¹⁵ The document’s explicit reference to information literacy comes next in subheading 7.4 and should be of special interest to librarians:

Professionally qualified and numerically adequate staff administer the institution’s library, information resources, and services. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction in basic information literacy.¹¹⁶

Important to note is that CIHE has drawn a distinction between library “orientation and training” and information literacy. Finally, subheading 7.6 makes a reference to assessment:

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy and utilization of its library, information resources, and services and uses the results of the data to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services.¹¹⁷

As in the educational programs in general, libraries in particular are given no specific method or formula to use in demonstrating their effectiveness.

Draft Standards (Effective January 1, 2006)

In the *Draft Standards for Accreditation* the number of Standards remains the same at 11, but CIHE has made major revisions within their organization and content. The revisions begin with the format of the document itself. Each Standard is now presented starting with the name and then a statement of the Standard in bold type. Next comes a set of numbered subheadings, presenting CIHE’s considerations in determining the institution’s fulfillment of the Standard. A section entitled “Institutional Effectiveness” concludes each Standard, providing a basis for institutional self-study and for evaluation by the Commission. The “Preamble” contains much of

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

the same text as the current Standards, but now makes references to “self regulation.”¹¹⁸ Unlike the current document, the draft contains a table of contents but still does not provide an index.

The 2006 document contains two references to “information literacy”; seven reference to “library” or “libraries”; nineteen references to “information resources”; five references to “learning outcomes”; and ten references to “assessment.” Of the eleven Standards included in the document, six concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

Standard 1 (Mission and Purposes) subheading 4 states:

The mission and purposes of the institution [...] provide direction to the curricula and other activities and form the basis on which expectations for student learning are developed. Specific objectives, reflective of the institution's overall mission and purposes, are developed by the institution's individual units.¹¹⁹

Significantly, the language in this passage has been changed, bringing in the concept of student learning objectives and associating it with the institutional mission. “Specific objectives” made available by “individual units” could be applied to information literacy programs developed by the library.

Standard 2 (Planning and Evaluation) has been changed so that “Planning” and “Evaluation” now each has its own separate heading. A basis for “institutional effectiveness” is provided in that:

The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives [...] with an emphasis on the academic program [...] These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods [enabling] the institution to demonstrate

¹¹⁸ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Draft Standards for Accreditation* (Bedford, MA: NEASC/CIHE, 2004), 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom.¹²⁰

In CIHE's view, an accredited institution is effective when it has plans for a curriculum that successfully promotes student learning objectives that are in line with the institution's mission, goals, and character. Furthermore, the institution is expected to have the ability to show evidence, in the form of gathered data, that it can implement such plans.

Standard 4 has been renamed from "Programs and Instruction" to "The Academic Program." The phrase "synthesis of learning" is still kept in this Standard, but now the concept of information literacy is also brought into play:

The institution ensures that students use information resources and information technology as an integral part of their education. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction and support in information literacy and information technology appropriate to the degree level.¹²¹

With information literacy added as an outcome for undergraduate programs, institutions are now expected to provide their students with knowledge in the traditional domains of "the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences," and also promote "the ability for [...] critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capacity for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy."¹²²

Another significant revision to Standard 4 is the addition of a new section on "Assessment of Student Learning." New materials added here include: "The institution implements a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement" (4.43); "The institution uses a variety of quantitative and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹²¹ Ibid., 7.

¹²² Ibid., 9.

qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students" (4.48); and, "The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level (4.49)." ¹²³ The language of this material fits well into the current educational focus on student-centered learning, and on providing a culture of evidence based on outcomes assessment.

Standard 7 is also given major revision. Currently called "Library and Information Resources," the name of this Standard will notably change to "Information Resources and Technology." The word "library," then, has been removed and replaced with "technology." This change, portentous as it might appear to some librarians, seems in fact merely to imply a wider concept of the library: not just as a physical location with a physical collection, but as the sum of its information resources. 7.2, in fact, states: "The institution provides sufficient and consistent financial support for the library and the effective maintenance and improvement of the institution's information resources and instructional and information technology."¹²⁴ Furthermore, the word "library" appears 6 times within the 12 subheadings of this Standard.

Other additions to Standard 7 will be of interest to information literacy librarian/instructors. For example, this Standard states that, "the institution ensures that students use information resources and technology as an integral part of their education, [gaining] increasingly sophisticated skills in evaluating the quality of information sources."¹²⁵ Standard 7 also states the expectation that, "the institution regularly and systematically evaluates the adequacy, utilization, and impact of its library, information resources, and services and

¹²³ Ibid., 14-15.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 23.

instructional and information technology and uses the findings to improve and increase the effectiveness of these services.”¹²⁶ 7.4 remains the same, still emphasizing the necessity of “professionally qualified and numerically adequate staff.”¹²⁷

The name for Standard 8 (currently Physical Resources) will be revised to “Physical and Technological Resources.” Revisions here reflect a new emphasis on access to technological resources necessary for teaching and learning, as well as expectations of institutional evaluation of such resources. Finally, Standard 10 (Public Disclosure) has several changes including the expectation for institutions to publish information on expected outcomes and student success.

Concluding Discussion on NEASC/CIHE

Both the current and the revised Standards fundamentally remain true to NEASC’s mission of providing quality assurance and promoting improvement. And though the format of the Standards may have been revised, much of the language remains descriptive. Nevertheless, every Standard in the *Draft* version for 2006 contains major changes. These changes fall into five thematic categories, as identified by the CIHE: information and technology; assessment; public disclosure; quality of the academic program; and responsibility and integrity.¹²⁸

The revisions illustrate CIHE’s recognition of the general trend in education toward student learning outcomes, the increasing importance of information resources and technology, and the growing impact of technology on institutional effectiveness and student success. Interestingly, CIHE has chosen to place the majority of its significant changes relating to

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 22.

¹²⁸ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Standards Revision Discussion Paper* (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Dec. 2003, accessed 5 Jan. 2005); available from http://www.neasc.org/cihe/revisions/standards_revision.pdf.

information resources and information literacy in Standard 4, “Academic Program” instead of the Standard on Information Resources and Technology. The greater emphasis on libraries and information resources placed within the standard on academic programs clearly connects libraries with teaching and learning. Proficiency in the use of the library is viewed as fundamental to the general education of undergraduate students, and librarians play an important role as educators.

Just as is expected of any other program on campus, information literacy programs need to articulate desired learning objectives, evaluate data, and assess the impact of the program on student success. Not strangers to these concepts, information literacy instructors have an opportunity for creative and effective use of their abilities in assessment to show change at the course, program, and institutional level. Librarian/instructors can use assessment to connect library programs to student success.

With data collection and evaluation for curricular issues distributed throughout the programs on campus, it becomes necessary to implement methods for coordinating an approach to developing desired learning outcomes. This presents yet another opportunity for collaboration between librarians and the faculty.

Finally, in developing a culture of evidence aimed at improvement, supported by a system of assessment and evaluation, the library has an opportunity to show the degree of its value through measurements of “input (e.g., faculty credentials and availability, student quality and engaged time in learning), processes (e.g., quality of instruction, appropriateness of activities and assignments for students), and outcomes (e.g., evidence of student learning, follow-up evidence of student success).”¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Ibid.(accessed).

It needs to be noted, however, that while the Commission provides many reasons for assessment (enhancing institutional effectiveness, improving student learning, etc.), there is no specific policy or guideline on the manner in which evaluation and assessment should be performed. The “Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness” provides the following:

There is no one best way to assess institutional effectiveness, and the Commission prescribes no formula that an institution must use for measuring or demonstrating its effectiveness. Assessment efforts will vary among different types of institutions as well as among institutions of the same type. Successful assessment efforts are compatible with the institution's mission and its available resources.¹³⁰

However, it would appear that the Commission is providing some guidance to institutions. “Assessment as Part of Accreditation Reviews,” a section of the Commission’s Web site on assessment, is supposed to provide “student learning assessment cues for all eleven standards for accreditation.”¹³¹ As of the date of this writing, however, the page for “Standard 7: Library and Information Resources” contained no examples, simply stating that content was under development.

¹³⁰ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness*(NESAC/CIHE, Jan. 1992, accessed 20 March 2005); available from <http://winchester.neasc.org/assessment/policy.htm>.

¹³¹ New England Association of Schools and Colleges, *Pilot Assessment Web Site. Self Studies*(NEASC/CIHE, accessed 20 March 2005); available from <http://winchester.neasc.org/assessment/ss.htm>.

CHAPTER 5: WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is the agency responsible for accreditation in California and Hawaii, the territories of Guam, American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the Pacific Basin, and East Asia, and areas of the Pacific and East Asia where American/International schools or colleges may apply to it for service.¹³²

WASC is composed of three accrediting Commissions, two of which are the accrediting bodies responsible for higher learning institutions: The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities accredits some 157 senior colleges and universities in the region;¹³³ and the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges evaluates and accredits some 221 public and private postsecondary institutions that offer two-year education programs and grant the associate degree.¹³⁴ Under the authority of WASC, each commission develops its own set of standards and policies.

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities

¹³² Western Association of Schools and Colleges, (accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.wascweb.org/>.

¹³³ Western Association of Schools and Colleges, *Directory*(WASC Senior, 1 March 2005, accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.wascweb.org/senior/directories.htm>.

¹³⁴ Western Association of Schools and Colleges, *Directory*(ACCJC, accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.accjc.org/>.

In 1995, the Senior Commission began the development of the work which culminated in November 2000 as the *Handbook of Accreditation*. The document contains the standards for accreditation, the institutional review process, Commission decision structure, policies and practices, federal mandates, and other information. The criteria for accreditation set forth in the *Handbook* contain elements that align under the framework of the Commission's central tenets, called "Core Commitments" to "Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness."

In addressing these Core Commitments, the Commission has articulated a set of four Standards for accreditation. Each Standard begins with the title and a statement defining general institutional attributes necessary for accreditation. The Standards are followed by sub-areas that address more specifically the essential points of the Standard. Key issues in each sub-area are addressed in a "Criteria for Review" section, with some of the Criteria accompanied by Guidelines placed in the sidebar. Following the Criteria section are "Questions for Institutional Engagement." The statements in this section are "purposefully framed as questions in order to suggest areas considered by the Commission as important for further inquiry and to further illuminate topical areas within the broader Standard."¹³⁵ Institutions are invited to use these questions in order to identify areas where exploration and self-study may be necessary.

The *Handbook* contains two references to "information literacy"; seven references to "library" or "libraries"; twelve references to "information resources"; five references to "learning outcomes"; and twenty-one references to "assessment." Three of the four Standards (along with their subheadings) concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

¹³⁵ Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, *2001 Handbook of Accreditation* (Alameda, CA: ACSCU/WASC, 2001), 16.

Standard 2 (Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions) Criterion 2.2

calls for a program of general education integrated throughout the curriculum:

Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and a fulfilling life. These programs also ensure the development of core learning abilities and competencies including, but not limited to, college-level written and oral communication; college-level quantitative skills; information literacy; and the habit of critical analysis of data and argument.¹³⁶

More interesting text for information literacy librarians comes in Criterion 2.3 where “the institution’s expectations for learning and student attainment are clearly reflected in [...] the use of its library and information resources.”¹³⁷ The necessary breadth and depth of knowledge for students depends on resources beyond the textbook.

Interestingly, the same Criterion makes a reference to the need for a co-curricular environment, emphasizing programs of collaborative learning (between faculty and librarians, for example) that serve to increase student success. And Criterion 2.7 brings in the topic of evaluation: “In order to improve program currency and effectiveness, all programs offered by the institution are subject to review, including analyses of the achievement of the program’s learning objectives and outcomes.”¹³⁸ This Criterion applies to information literacy programs offered by the library, whether as stand-alone classes or instruction that is integrated into the curriculum.

The third Question for Institutional Engagement for Criterion 2.7 inquires into the role of the library, information resources, and co-curricular programs in support of active student

¹³⁶ Ibid., 20.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 21.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

learning; and Question 8 asks about the institution’s “expected core learning abilities and competencies” for students.¹³⁹

Standard 3 (Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability) requires among other things an “investment in [...] information resources” to promote “educational objectives and create a high quality environment for learning.”¹⁴⁰ Criteria 3.6 and 3.7 of this Standard further expound on the topic with a focus on holdings, access, and support in information technology in order to fulfill educational purposes. And the “Question for Institutional Engagement” section includes:

How does the institution ensure that its members develop the critical information literacy skills needed to locate, evaluate, and responsibly use information? How does it utilize the special skills of information professionals to support teaching, learning, and information technology planning?¹⁴¹

Finally, Standard 4 (Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement) contains elements that concern the development of a culture of evidence, calling for quantitative and qualitative data in assessment of educational effectiveness, student learning, and co-curricular objectives.¹⁴²

Concluding Discussion on WASC Senior

Following much controversy in the 1990s wherein the federal government and the Department of Education criticized the regional accrediting agencies for introducing the issue of “diversity” into their standards, the WASC Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges began

¹³⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴² Ibid., 29-30.

the task of publishing several draft policies to encourage a dialogue that would lead to significant changes in the principles that guided the process of accreditation.¹⁴³

In *Achieving Institutional Effectiveness through Assessment* (1992), *Dialogues for Diversity* (1993), the reports of the Task Force on the Purposes of Accreditation and the Task Force on Assessment (1995), *An Invitation to Dialogue* (1998), and *Invitation to Dialogue II* (1999), the Senior Commission explored new approaches in developing new standards and procedures that would ensure academic quality while winning public trust. Framing accreditation within the context of commitments and principles that place public accountability and institutional commitment in the forefront, these efforts eventually culminated in the adoption of the *Handbook of Accreditation* in November, 2000.

Important among the criteria in WASC's redesign was the requirement for the demonstration of a culture of evidence, giving emphasis to educational effectiveness and student learning. WASC Senior's Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness puts forth the Commission's expectation that its institutions collect, analyze, and evaluate data to assure program delivery and learner accomplishments appropriate to the educational objectives and design at the institutional and program level.¹⁴⁴ Elements of educational effectiveness are incorporated into all four Standards, and although not specifically named, libraries and information literacy programs are also expected to perform such evaluation and analysis.

More interesting to note, however, is that in its revision the Commission eliminated the separate Standard for libraries and information resources, choosing instead to embed them into sections of other standards. With less text devoted to the function of, and expectations from,

¹⁴³ Ronald W. Tobin, "The Age of Accreditation: A Regional Perspective," *Academe* 80 (July/August 1994): 26.

¹⁴⁴ Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, 5.

academic libraries, librarians may find determining effective methods to demonstrate compliance to the Standards difficult. On the positive side, however, the increased credibility given to the instructional role generally assumed by librarians could provide academic libraries with opportunities to grow beyond their role as just access providers.

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) is the second entity within WASC, with its own set of standards, policies, and procedures on accreditation for two-year postsecondary institutions. ACCJC's document, the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, contains Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission Policies. Each of the four Standards in the document begins with a name and a statement of the Standard, followed by lettered sections related to the Standard (each with its own statement), in turn followed by numbered subsections listing the criteria required for accreditation.

The *Handbook* contains no references to “information literacy” (though there are two references to “information competency”—a term more in use in California than the rest of the country); sixteen references to “library” or “libraries”; no references to “information resources”; thirty-three references to “learning outcomes”; and thirteen references to “assessment.” Three of the four Standards (along with their subheadings) concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

An institution applying for candidacy must completely meet all the basic criteria set forth in the Eligibility Requirements before beginning a period of formal self-study. The 21 Requirements in the document were adopted by the Commission in June 1995; revised in January 1996; and further revised in January 2004.¹⁴⁵ Requirements 8 (Educational Programs), 10 (Student Learning), and 11 (General Education) make references and testify to the importance the Commission places on systematic analysis of student learning and achievement of outcomes, including competence in “computational skills.”¹⁴⁶ Requirements 14 (Student Services) and 15 (Information and Learning Resources) make no specific reference to the library, but phrases like “support of student learning,” and “access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support [...] instructional programs,” may be applied to information competency programs offered by libraries.¹⁴⁷ And Requirement 19 (Institutional Planning and Evaluation) makes clear the need for institutional self-assessment.

ACCJC’s current Accreditation Standards were adopted in June 2002. Standard I (Institutional Mission and Effectiveness) begins with the expectation that institutions “demonstrate a strong commitment” to “student learning” evidenced and improved through “analyses of quantitative and qualitative data.”¹⁴⁸ Assessment and evaluation are connected to the library in I.B.7: “The institution assesses its evaluation mechanisms through a systematic

¹⁴⁵ Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, *Accreditation Reference Handbook* (Novato, CA: ACCJC/WASC, 2004).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

review of their effectiveness in improving instructional programs, student support services, and library and other learning support services.”¹⁴⁹

Standard II (Student Learning Programs and Services) takes evaluation of library services one step further, connecting it to the campus-wide learning environment:

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes [...] providing an environment that supports learning.¹⁵⁰

ACCJC makes it clear that information competency is an important component of the general education. II.A.3, in fact, contains the language that documents this attitude:

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including [...] a capability to be a productive individual and life long learner: skills include [...] information competency, computer literacy, [...] critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means [and] qualities include[ing] an appreciation of ethical principles.¹⁵¹

Here in one phrase, and identified as student learning outcomes, are captured so many of the elements that are incorporated into the concept of information competency: the ability to find needed information, critical thinking skills in the evaluation of that information, ethical use of the information, and the thirst for knowledge that continues throughout a lifetime.

Standard II.C (Library and Learning Support Services) reiterates the same position, stressing the need for the institution to provide “access and training to students so that library and other learning support services may be used effectively and efficiently.”¹⁵² It also stipulates that, “the institution systematically assesses these services using student learning outcomes, faculty

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 19-20.

¹⁵² Ibid., 23.

input, and other appropriate measures in order to improve the effectiveness of the services.”¹⁵³

The section that specifically mentions information competency states, “the institution provides ongoing instruction for users of library and other learning support services so that students are able to develop skills in information competency.”¹⁵⁴ The section also states:

The institution evaluates library and other learning support services to assure their adequacy in meeting identified student needs. Evaluation of these services provides evidence that they contribute to the achievement of student learning outcomes. The institution uses the results of these evaluations as the basis for improvement.¹⁵⁵

There is a measure of redundancy in the structure and language within this and other Standards, but that redundancy is by design and stresses at every level the importance of information competency instruction, and the evaluation and assessment of information competency programs.

Finally, Standard III (Technology) section C (Technology Resources) requires that “the institution provides quality training in the effective application of its information technology to students and personnel.”¹⁵⁶ Interesting in this statement is the reference to training not just for students, but also to personnel (including faculty and staff).

Concluding Discussion on WASC—ACCJC

ACCJC faced great opposition from the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges when it decided in 2002 to approve new accreditation standards.¹⁵⁷ The opposition was

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵⁷ The Academic Senate represents faculty in the formation of policy on academic and professional matters.

based on ACCJC's expectation that institutions develop a culture of evidence. The Academic Senate argued that the new standards and their reliance on student learning outcomes were only a compromise in an effort to curb encroaching government attempts at centralized authority over higher education.

The Standards, it was argued, were fundamentally flawed in that they would revise the complexities of dynamic classroom experience to reductive reporting criteria.¹⁵⁸ The Senate even made a case for academic libraries and information competency, pointing out that measuring effectiveness in achieving outcomes could be difficult for units in the campus that do not have data such as grades, or course completion and graduation rates available to them. In short, the Senate found ACCJC's new standards to be "unsubstantiated by research, illogical, reductive, expensive, invasive, costly, time consuming, devoid of references to local senate authority and expertise, and insensitive to local bargaining rights."¹⁵⁹

Outcomes assessment, problematic or not, is indeed a major theme running through ACCJC's Standards. Other key themes identified by the Commission include:

- Institutional commitment, to stated mission and goals, and to improvement of student learning (through outcomes assessment). As a unit within the institution, the library needs to align its mission and goals with that of the college.
- Evaluation, planning, and improvement focusing on the effectiveness of processes and policies. An evaluation of student needs and college programs or services (information competency, for example) would lead to goal-setting for improvement, resource distribution, implementation, and re-evaluation.
- Organization, requiring adequate staff and resources to support student learning. This theme has implications for the number of librarians with an MLIS.

¹⁵⁸ Research Committee 2003-2004, *The 2002 Accreditation Standards: Implementation* (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, Fall 2004), 12-13.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

- Dialogue, to take place across the campus, with a focus on student achievement and student learning. The process of dialogue presents opportunities for collaborative action (between librarians and faculty, for example, on information competency instruction).
- Institutional integrity, dealing with issues of equity, diversity, intellectual freedom.¹⁶⁰

In guiding institutions for the purpose of evaluation of the library and learning support services, ACCJC recommends asking questions about the quantity, quality, breadth, depth, and variety of the collections. For library instruction and information competency instruction, questions to ask focus on articulation of competencies and evidence of effectiveness of the program, provided in the form of outcomes assessment.

¹⁶⁰ Summarized from: Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, "Guide to Evaluating Institutions," (Novato, CA: ACCJC/WASC, 2004), 5-8.

CHAPTER 6: NORTH CENTRAL, NORTHWEST, AND SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

The Criteria in the edition of the *Handbook of Accreditation* examined in this work (3rd ed.) have been optional for fall 2004, but become effective as of January 1, 2005. In this edition, as in the previous 1998 edition, North Central Association (NCA) addresses five major Criteria for accreditation. Each Criterion is composed of three different elements: first, the name and a Criterion statement defining institutional attributes necessary for accreditation; next, come “Core Components” for each Criterion, all of which need to be addressed by institutions applying for initial accreditation or those reaffirming their accreditation; and after each Core Component comes the third element, in the “Examples of Evidence” section, illustrating specific types of examples an institution might use to address the Core Component.

The document contains no references to “information literacy”; fourteen references to “library” or “libraries”; no references to “information resources”; seventeen references to “learning outcomes”; and seventy-seven references to “assessment.” Of the five Criteria included, three concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

Criterion 2 (Preparing for the Future) states: “The organization’s allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.”¹⁶¹ It is

¹⁶¹ North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, *Handbook of Accreditation*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: Higher Learning Commission, 2003), 3.1-3.

important to note here that the Commission brings together resources, evaluation, and the quality of education, connecting them to one another in one statement.

Core Component 2c expands on the same topic: “The organization’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.”¹⁶² The language in this Component separates evaluation from assessment, with the implication that while assessment is necessary in generating data, institutions need to have dependable, ongoing processes for making effective critical self-evaluation using the data.

Criterion 3 (Student Learning and Effective Teaching) states, “the organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.”¹⁶³ Although the term “information literacy” is never specifically mentioned in the *Handbook*, a case can be made for the essential role of information literacy in every one of the 4 Core Components of Criterion 3.

One of the “Examples of Evidence” for Component 3a suggests: “The organization’s assessment of student learning extends to all educational offerings, including credit and noncredit certificate programs.”¹⁶⁴ This Component, then, in part expresses the Commission’s assumption that student learning needs to be an institution-wide effort. If an academic library provides instruction, it needs to perform assessment of student learning just like any other educational unit at the institution.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 3.1-4.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

Component 3b specifies, “the organization values and supports effective teaching.”¹⁶⁵ This idea includes organizational support of “faculty in keeping abreast of the research on teaching and learning, and of technological advances that can positively affect student learning and the delivery of instruction.”¹⁶⁶ Within the multiplicity of possibilities from which an organization might choose its pedagogical models, then, technological advances are viewed as one that could be conducive to positive student learning outcomes.

Component 3c, “the organization creates effective learning environments,” expands on the previous Component, exemplifying characteristics like “advising systems [that] focus on student learning, including the mastery of skills required for academic success”; “employing [...] new technologies that enhance effective learning environments”; and “systems of quality assurance [that] include regular review of whether [the institution’s] educational strategies, activities, processes, and technologies enhance student learning.”¹⁶⁷ Information literacy programs, it might be pointed out, are learning environments that employ new technologies, that generally focus on student learning, and that enhance the competencies needed for academic success.

Component 3d, “The organization’s learning resources support student learning and effective teaching,” has clear implications for the library as a learning resource. It is, however, significant that the word “library” is not used in this Component.¹⁶⁸ The choice of words here suggests that libraries are only one of the many resources needed for an effective teaching and learning environment.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ The “Examples of Evidence” section of 3d makes a parenthetical mention of the word “library.”

By its very title, Criterion 4 (Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge) peculiarly parallels ALA's definition of an information literate person (one who has "the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information").¹⁶⁹ The Criterion itself states, "The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission."¹⁷⁰ NCA makes no reference to information literacy, but the key points addressed here are similar to the goals of information literacy instruction: great value is placed in "preparation for lifelong learning," "social responsibility," and in cultivating "creativity," "intellectual inquiry."¹⁷¹

"Examples of Evidence" for Core Component 4b further elucidate this premise, with one of the examples stating: "The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society."¹⁷² Once again, this expectation is very similar to the goals of information literacy; and once again, the potential contribution that information literacy could make is ignored.

Another one of the examples in this section brings the previous concepts together with learning outcomes: "Learning outcomes demonstrate that graduates have achieved [a] breadth of knowledge and skills and the capacity to exercise intellectual inquiry";¹⁷³ and the next Core

¹⁶⁹ American Library Association's Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, (accessed).

¹⁷⁰ North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 3.1-5.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

Component (4c) mandates organizational assessment of the same concepts. Finally Core Component 4d instructs institutions on their need to teach responsible, ethical use of knowledge.

Concluding Discussion on North Central

The Criteria in the *Handbook of Accreditation* show the Commission's commitment to student learning. Assessment is valued as a means of providing evidence that student learning is taking place, as well as improving effective teaching. With a shift in perception from the traditional emphasis on institutional inputs (such as infrastructure and resources) to the current prominence given to learning objectives and achievement of intended outcomes as a means of providing evidence of institutional effectiveness and efficiency, the 5 Criteria in the *Handbook* are appropriately broad, presenting Criteria in deliberately vague terminology, thus protecting the diversity among institutional goals and missions. Not prescriptive in nature, and avoiding explicit definitions, interpretation of concepts is determined by the nature of the institution and its goals and missions.

The Commission recognizes that quantitative measuring inputs such as the square footage and book inventories of libraries are by themselves insufficient measures of institutional quality, and that such data would serve better when accompanied by student learning outcomes and measures. The test for accreditation lies in the institution's ability to link its resources with its students and faculty; and to collect evidence showing that the resources are being used, and that something worthwhile is occurring because of this usage. Unfortunately, NCA misses the opportunity to bring in the concept of information literacy and link it to the value added by the academic library to the educational program.

While the methods for meeting the Criteria are presented in broad terms applying generally to the educational program, libraries could still use their information literacy program (if they have one) within the context of the Criteria. Institutions could show evidence in support of Criteria 3 and 4 from data gathered by their libraries in the form of an evaluation of the use of information literacy programs in terms of support and enhancement of learning and teaching; and in terms of “partnerships and innovations that enhance student learning and strengthen teaching effectiveness” (i.e. between librarians and faculty);¹⁷⁴ and in terms of learning outcomes that demonstrate the capacity for intellectual inquiry and preparation for lifelong learning.

With an increasing public demand for quality assurance and evidence of efficiency and effectiveness in higher education, the Higher Learning Commission launched its Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) in July 1999. Using this program as an alternative to the traditional process of accreditation, an institution can maintain its accredited status through an intensive self-study using a flexible quality framework that demonstrates dedication to systematic improvement of performance. As a common basis for measurement, providing educational results in general, and student learning outcomes in particular, presents libraries and information literacy programs with an excellent role in this type of accreditation.

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) oversees regional accreditation for 156 higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.¹⁷⁵ NWCCU’s document, the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.2-12.

¹⁷⁵ Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, (NWCCU, 12 January 2005, accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.nwccu.org/>.

Accreditation Handbook, begins by listing a set of twenty essential “Eligibility Requirements.”

These requirements represent “an expected level of performance” and “*must* be met” by institutions applying for initial or continuing accreditation (*emphasis added*).¹⁷⁶ The Eligibility Requirements have parenthetical notes that point to a related Standard and/or policy.

NWCCU focuses on nine Standards in the *Handbook*. Each Standard begins with a number and name. Next comes the scope of each Standard in the form of lettered Standard Elements, each with its own statement relating its general intent. Numbered Standard indicators follow to provide further definition. Related policies on accreditation follow the last indicators section of several of the Standards. Finally, a section identifying supporting documents for the Standard is included. These documents are divided into three categories: required documentation (information embedded in the self-study report), required exhibits (peripheral material for the self-study report), and suggested materials. The document contains a table of contents and an index.

The *Handbook* contains no references to “information literacy”; sixty-four references to “library” or “libraries”; forty-four references to “information resources”; six references to “learning outcomes”; and forty-seven references to “assessment.” Four of the twenty requirements for eligibility, and three of the nine Standards in the document concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

Eligibility Requirement 8 (Educational Program) requires that, “the institution offers one or more educational programs leading to the associate degree or higher that are [...] effective in

¹⁷⁶ Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, *Accreditation Handbook* (Redmond, WA: NWCCU, 2003), 5.

the use of library and information resources.”¹⁷⁷ Requirement 10 (Library and Learning Resources) further states: “The institution provides library resources, technology and services for students and faculty appropriate for its mission and for all of its educational programs wherever located and however delivered.”¹⁷⁸ The question on the location and method of delivery brings into discussion distance-learning opportunities as well as online information literacy courses. Requirement 12 (Student Achievement) expands on the same topic, now relating program effectiveness to assessment: “Through regular and systematic assessment, [the institution] demonstrates that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, will achieve [expected learning] outcomes.”¹⁷⁹ And Requirement 17 (Institutional Effectiveness) applies the need for assessment and evaluation on an institutional level.

Institutional evaluation is addressed in Standard 1 (Institutional Mission and Goals), stating in 1.B (Planning and Effectiveness) that, “through its planning process, the institution asks questions, seeks answers, analyzes itself, and revises its goals, policies, procedures, and resource allocation.”¹⁸⁰ Institutions accredited by NWCCU are expected to articulate their missions and purposes, strive to achieve them, and then evaluate their achievements to effect institutional efficiency and improvement. Some of the ways this evaluation can be performed is through “studies regarding effectiveness of programs and their graduates,” or “pre- and post-test comparisons of student knowledge, skills, and abilities.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 27.

Standard 2 (Educational Program and Its Effectiveness)—by far the longest and most detailed of all the Standards—includes several sections of interest to information literacy instructors. The General Requirements of this Standard call for an identification of student competencies by the institution. Elements of Standard 2 mandate that, “Degree and certificate programs demonstrate a coherent design [...] characterized by [...] synthesis of learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes; and [requiring] the use of library and other information sources”; and that systematic assessment must demonstrate that students have achieved the expected outcomes.¹⁸² Integration of library programs into the general education curriculum is also addressed here: “Faculty, in partnership with library and information resources personnel, ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process.”¹⁸³

Another element of Standard 2, in dealing with the undergraduate program, states:

Baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs include a substantial core of general education instruction with identifiable outcomes and require competence in (a) written and oral communication, (b) quantitative reasoning, (c) critical analysis and logical thinking, and (d) literacy in the discourse or technology appropriate to the program of study.¹⁸⁴

There is no reference to information literacy, but the outcomes and competencies emphasized here share much in common with the abilities and skills developed through information literacy. If an academic library has an information literacy program, then this standard can be addressed through evaluation and assessment of that program.

¹⁸² Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 30.

Of the 6 policies attached to Standard 2, Policy 2.2 (Educational Assessment) holds the greatest implications for information literacy instruction. NWCCU in this Policy takes part in the trend to move from quantitative (e.g. the size of the library's collections) to qualitative measures (e.g. student development), and to look for evidence in the form of outcomes assessment. An example is provided in the "Mid-Program Assessments" section, emphasizing that, "A required course, program, or sequence in any subject matter can be [...] assessed [through outcomes measures], [...] as can nearly any part of the program in general education or the program as a whole."¹⁸⁵ Whether integrated into course work or as stand-alone classes, qualitative measures of students' information literacy competency should be taken into consideration for the purpose of outcomes assessment, especially since an inventory of such documentation is mandated in the "Supporting Documentations" required for Standard 2. Methods for taking such measurements, however, are not specified.

Standard 5 is devoted entirely to "Library and Information Resources." Consistent with the stated purpose and scope of the library, the statement in Standard 5.B.2 indicates the active educational goals that libraries of institutions accredited by NWCCU should have: "Library and information resources and services contribute to developing the ability of students, faculty, and staff to use the resources independently and effectively."¹⁸⁶ The importance of the role of the library in teaching and learning is further expressed in the desire for collaboration between faculty and the library in 5.D.5: "The institution consults library and information resources staff in curriculum development."¹⁸⁷

Standard 5.E (Planning and Evaluation) states the requirements for the evaluation of the role of the library in teaching functions: "Related evaluation processes regularly assess the quality,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

accessibility, and use of libraries and other information resource repositories and their services to determine the level of effectiveness in support of the educational program.”¹⁸⁸ Data for such evaluations could be provided through supporting documentation such as, “statistics on use of library and other learning resources”; “computer usage statistics related to the retrieval of library resources”; and “printed information describing user services provided by the computing facility.”¹⁸⁹

Concluding Discussion on Northwest

Testifying to the significance NWCCU places in the role of assessment, each of the Commission’s nine Standards for accreditation contains within it at least one direct reference to assessment, evaluation, measurement, quality, or effectiveness. The criteria for evaluation in the *Accreditation Handbook* are not strictly prescriptive in nature: a fair reading of NWCCU’s document reveals traditional principles of accreditation such as input measures, balanced with a proactive approach wherein evaluation of an institution’s educational quality and effectiveness are determined in relation to its mission and goals.

Placing great emphasis on student learning requires an assessment of learned competencies, and learned competencies generally accentuate particular institutional efforts. Effective measures are usually available at the course level, but become more problematic at the program level. The Commission has endeavored, therefore, to provide some guidelines for its institutions to apply such measures at the major or degree level. As measures turn from a simple “credit hour” system to one of “competency,” libraries and information literacy programs in this region stand to benefit, ensuring their relevance to the institution through employing measures of competencies in assessing student learning and success because of library use. The Commission,

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 71.

however, provides libraries with no specific guidelines for this type of assessment. The list of required supporting documentation for the standard on libraries concerns mainly statistics on hours of service, staff size, budgets, collections, and usage data.

The statements in the *Accreditation Handbook* that seem most relevant to information literacy instruction are placed firmly within the “Educational Program and Its Effectiveness” Standard. The implicit references to information literacy and the explicit references to library use in this Standard clearly connote the desire and expectation for collaborative work between faculty and librarians in institutions accredited by NWCCU.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools’ Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) has a total of 787 member institutions and seven candidate institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia, as well as some institutions that award associate, baccalaureate, master’s, or doctoral degrees in Latin America.¹⁹⁰

The Commission’s January 2004 document, *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* provides an overview of accreditation, Core Requirements (basic qualifications to be met by institution), Comprehensive Standards, Federal Requirements (for Title IV participation), and Commission policies. The ten Standards in the document focus on three major areas: “Institutional Mission, Governance, and Effectiveness,” “Programs,” and “Resources.” Each major area is followed by a set of elements which are in turn followed by their own subheadings. The document contains a table of contents but no index.

¹⁹⁰ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Accredited and Candidate List: Alpha Order* (Commission on Colleges, March 2005, accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.sacsco.org/pdf/weblist0305alpha.pdf>.

Principles of Accreditation contains no references to “information literacy”; five references to “library” or “libraries”; four references to “information resources”; two references to “learning outcomes”; and three references to “assessment.” Two of the twelve Core Requirements, and three of the ten Standards (along with their elements and subheadings) concern institutional resources (human and physical assets, including those necessary for information literacy: librarians, libraries, as well as other resources), learning objectives, and outcomes assessment.

Core Requirement 2.9, the minimal requisite for libraries, states:

The institution [...] provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections as well as to other learning/information resources [...] These collections and resources are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs.¹⁹¹

The primary concern in this statement, however, is access to library collections. The following Requirement (2.10) makes a vague mention about “[promoting] student learning and [enhancing] development of [...] student,” but there is no explicit mention of libraries.¹⁹²

Standard 3.3 (Institutional Effectiveness) addresses the need for institutional level assessments of “expected outcomes for [the institution’s] educational programs and its [...] educational support services.”¹⁹³ Later passages in the document make it clear that such support services include those generally provided by libraries: for example, “the institution’s use of technology enhances student learning [...] and ensures that students have access to and training in the use of technology.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Principles of Accreditation* (Decatur, GA: SACS-COC, 2004), 17.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 22.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 24.

Standard 3.5 (Educational Programs: *Undergraduate Programs*) requires the identification of college-level competencies (one of which is sometimes identified by other regional agencies as information literacy), and evidence that students are achieving those competencies. Finally, Standard 3.8 (Library and Other Learning Resources) makes remarks that emphasize library instruction but do not use the term “information literacy.” Institutions are required to ensure “that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.”¹⁹⁵

Concluding Discussion on SACS

SACS caused great controversy amongst the librarians in its institutions and nationwide with the replacement of its 1986 Criteria for Accreditation.¹⁹⁶ Compared to the minimal treatment given to libraries and information literacy programs in the *Principles of Accreditation*, the previous document had contained a five page section on “Libraries and Other Learning Resources,” with forty “must” statements regarding libraries for institutions seeking accreditation.¹⁹⁷ The decidedly less prescriptive language in the *Principles* is part of an overall trend among the regional accrediting agencies toward developing standards that are more motivational than regulatory. However, the ubiquitous presence of electronic resources on the open Web and the changing of the traditional library model certainly must have played a part in the formulation of the new Standards.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹⁶ For example, see Larry L. Hardesty, "Libraries' Dropped from Accreditation Criteria," *College & Research Libraries News* 61, no. 10 (Nov. 2000). Or, Wendy Johnson and Crystal Lee, "Are Academic Libraries and Librarians Obsolete?," *Louisiana Libraries* 63, no. 2 (Fall 2000).

¹⁹⁷ Hardesty.

It should be noted, however, that though the term “information literacy” receives no mention in the *Principles of Accreditation*, and though the concept is barely recognized in its connection to libraries, nevertheless SACS is concerned with the concept and acknowledges the trend toward institutional accountability using measurable learning outcomes for information literacy instruction. In *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*, for example, elements under “Student Support” call for the institution’s need to provide “library resources, [...] including [...] library user and information literacy instruction”; and “training in information literacy including research techniques.”¹⁹⁸ And one of the Professional Development Sessions offered in the 2004 annual SACS conference was entitled “The Distance Learner and Information Literacy Instruction: Methods and Measures.” The advertisement for the session declares:

A review of the literature for best practices and recognized online library instruction programs will assist with discovering and reinforcing methods of evaluating, improving, documenting, and promoting our own programs [...] Libraries must offer instructional programs and measure the learning outcomes to ensure that the needs of the learners are being met.¹⁹⁹

This session’s target audience, according to the advertisement, was “librarians, instructional officers, faculty, and institutional effectiveness personnel.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs*(Dec. 2000, accessed 31 Dec. 2004); available from <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/commadap.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, *Proceedings: A Communiqué of the Commission on Colleges*(Fall 2004, accessed 31 Dec. 2004); available from <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Proceedings-FALL-2004.PDF>.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*(accessed).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Each of the seven commissions examined in this work has a policy manual or handbook with a list of the standards or criteria that must be met by institutions seeking candidacy, initial accreditation, or a reaffirmation of their standing. With the exception of the New England Commission, every Commission's handbook also contains a set of basic eligibility requirements which must be met in order to determine the institution's readiness for a comprehensive visit by an evaluation team. Several Commissions also included other supporting documentation to help guide institutions in the process of self-study and evaluation. The following observations were drawn from the accreditation handbooks and accompanying documentation.

Emphasis on Institutional Mission and Goals

All the Commissions take part in the movement to base standards on institutional individuality, articulated in the institution's mission and goals. The expectation is that rather than attempt to live up to prescribed ideals, institutions will instead address the needs of the academic community (i.e., students, faculty, and staff). This concept is part of the overall trend to focus on outcomes rather than processes.

The implicit general consensus is that the mission of an institution of higher education needs to address the education of its students. In viewing its mission and goals from the student's perspective, it becomes necessary for the institution to consider ways in which student learning might be enhanced. Outcomes assessment is the preferred means for addressing these needs.

Emphasis on Outcomes Assessment

The regional accrediting agencies' recent focus on outcomes has meant recognition of concepts like competencies, student engagement, and student learning. The current buzzwords in

this environment are “learning outcomes,” and “assessment,” concepts to which all the standards handbooks and supporting documents make reference. Furthermore, these references are spread throughout, appearing repeatedly within the documents. This reiteration is perhaps due to the fact that each of the standards or criteria in these documents is meant to stand up on its own for purposes of self-study and evaluation. The fact that the need for outcomes assessment is repeated in so many of the standards attests to the urgency placed by regional agencies in their expectations that institutions of higher education create a viable culture of evidence.

All the Commissions’ documents emphasize the importance of developing institutional outcomes within the context of the institution’s mission and goals. Outcomes could thus have various definitions depending on situational factors. All units within the institution (including the library) are expected to establish goals that contribute to institutional outcomes; measure and evaluate the success of their program in supporting the purpose of the institution; and bring about improvements based on their findings.

The emphasis on using evidence gathered from outcomes assessment to bring about improvement is a related general trend seen in the Commissions’ documents. The Commissions’ expectation is that institutions will build a culture of evidence, using qualitative and quantitative data, in order to make informed decisions in institutional and programmatic improvements.

NCA’s Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), an alternative process for institutional reaccreditation, is a dramatic example of this concept. AQIP involves a process of rigorous self-study where the institution, using questions designed around quality principles, assesses its own strengths and weaknesses in effectively and efficiently serving the needs of its community. This trend is an interesting move away from standards-based accreditation.

Emphasis on Academic Libraries

While traditionally libraries have received particular attention within the standards and criteria for accreditation, the current documents from the seven Commissions suggest a change in the general outlook. Only two of the seven Commissions provide separate standards that deal specifically with libraries, while the other five Commissions' references to library resources and/or instruction are integrated into other standards. The documents from four of the seven Commissions place emphasis mainly on the library's collections and accessibility with little or no reference to information literacy. Some librarians believe that this change in the Commissions' outlook augurs a near future when academic libraries "may no longer be the best model for every institution," and "the MLIS librarian may no longer necessarily be the most appropriate personnel choice."²⁰¹ But while these assumptions may hold some merit, there is another view possible.

While many of the standards and supporting documents contain few direct references to libraries, the use of broader but related terms (like information resources and services), and the general placement of such terms in the standards and criteria that deal with educational programs and institutional effectiveness, implies the Commissions' view of the library as an educational unit within the institution. Viewed this way, the library becomes less of a support service and more of a source of direct learning. Like any other educational program on campus, academic libraries would need to perform assessment using learning outcomes to demonstrate their programs' effects on the learners and the learning process at the institution.

Summary Analyses of Text on Libraries

²⁰¹ Johnson and Lee: 3. Also, see Hardesty: 888.

Following is a brief review of the seven Regional Accrediting Commissions' guidelines, policies, and expectations in regards to libraries:

- Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Higher Education does not provide a standard specifically about libraries. In fact, *Characteristics* mentions libraries and learning resource centers only briefly, with no more than a few lines devoted to the two. Middle States places its treatment of libraries more or less at the center of Standard 11, "Educational Offerings" (analogy to the library as an educational resource at the center of the institution). Though brief, Middle States makes it clear that it views the library and its services as essential to the institution.
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Institutions of Higher Education currently has a standard dedicated to libraries. Standard 7, "Library and Information Resources," includes statements on the importance of holdings and access. The version of *Standards for Accreditation* going into effect in 2006 also has a Standard 7, renamed "Library and Other Information Resources." The revised Standard 7 places more emphasis on the development of the library within the context of institutional goal and missions and less on holdings and access.
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities has no specific standard about libraries. Most of the references to the library are found within Standard 2 (Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions). In this Standard, the library is placed side-by-side with other educational programs, with the expectation that these programs will all add to learning and student attainment.

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has an eligibility requirement on “Information and Learning Resource,” specifying the need for access to services that support the institution’s mission and instructional programs. A main component of Standard II is the section, “Library and Learning Support Services,” with the explicit expectation that students will use library resources and services, and that these services will facilitate achieving student learning outcomes articulated by the institution. The library is expected regularly to perform evaluations of its services and to assess its evaluation mechanism.
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools’ Higher Learning Commission has no Criterion or section of a Criterion on libraries. In fact, the *Handbook of Accreditation* contains very few references to libraries or related terms (14 occurrences in 192 pages). More than one third of these references are found within one paragraph (5 references) in a chapter of explanatory text on the Criteria (Criterion 3: Core Component 3d—Student Learning and Effective Teaching). Here, libraries are “just one of many resources” the institution must make integral to students’ education.²⁰² The same expectations and lack of reference to libraries holds true for the text on AQIP.
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities includes in its *Accreditation Handbook* a specific eligibility requirement and a detailed Standard for “Library and Learning Resources.” The *Handbook* connects library resources to institutional mission and goals; includes expectations for services, holdings, and access; and talks about library partnerships with faculty. Supporting Documentation provides a helpful list of required

²⁰² North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, *Handbook of Accreditation*, 3rd ed. (Higher Learning Commission, 1 Oct. 2003, accessed 28 Dec. 2004); available from <http://www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org/resources/handbook/Handbook03.pdf>. P. 3.2-11.

exhibits, many of which involve the type of quantitative data typically gathered by libraries.

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges has a Core Requirement on learning resources and services, and a Standard covering the Library and Other Learning Resource. The major emphasis is on the collections.

Common Threads Concerning Libraries

Although the Regional Commissions differ considerably in the emphasis they place on the academic library, there are nevertheless some similarities running through most of the guidelines:

- The library should have mission and goals in direct relation to the mission and goals of the institution.
- Library use is crucial to students' general education, and the library is a part of the teaching/learning function of the university.
- Collaboration between librarians and faculty is encouraged and expected in order to promote library use through course syllabi and assignments.
- Collections should support the curriculum, and library resources should be accessible to students and faculty, including those in off-campus programs.
- The library should regularly perform evaluations of its resources and services to create evidence of effectiveness.

- Expectations for libraries are not prescriptive, and ask for qualitative measures along with quantitative ones.
- Expectations are of library evaluation evidence in the form of outcomes.
- No specific method or formula is provided for performing evaluation.

Emphasis on Information Literacy

Identified by the majority of the Commissions as a specific student learning outcome, information literacy instruction and the assessment of information literacy programs are significant in demonstrating the academic library's relationship to the teaching and learning functions of the institution.

While only four Commissions (Middle States, New England Association of Schools and Colleges, and the two Commissions of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges) make explicit reference to the term “information literacy” in their standards, all seven Commissions make clear statements about the role of the library as part of the teaching/learning process.²⁰³ Furthermore, there is great emphasis placed on the need for collaboration between librarians and faculty in providing effective instruction.

With regard to the need for libraries to show the connection between their information literacy programs and the fulfillment of the institution's mission and goals, WASC Senior is the only Commission that makes no connection at all between the academic library and the support of institutional mission and goals; Middle States and North Central make clear but indirect connections; and NEASC, Northwest, SACS, and WASC-ACCJC make clear and direct connections between the two.

²⁰³ WASC-ACCJC actually uses the term “information competency,” but this is just another name for the same concept as information literacy.

Summary Analyses of Text on Information Literacy

Following is a brief review of the seven Regional Accrediting Commissions' explicit and implicit views on information literacy:

- Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Higher Education is by far the most dedicated proponent of information literacy, finding it vital to all disciplines. While not including a standard specifically on libraries, information literacy and the academic library are explicitly connected to each other in Standards 11 (Educational Offerings) and 12 (General Education). Integration of information literacy into the coursework, and evidence of effectiveness in the form of outcomes assessment are recommended.
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges' Commission on Institutions of Higher Education currently mandates the use of other information resources besides those used in the classroom, and promotes competencies like critical analysis and concepts like life-long learning, though not placing these terms within the context of information literacy. Information literacy instruction, however, is named and tied in to the academic library in Standard 7 (Library and Information Resources). The 2006 version of *Standards for Accreditation* identifies information literacy as a student learning outcome.
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities has criteria on information literacy within its Standard 2 (Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions). The view expressed supports the need for integrated syllabi through collaboration between librarians and faculty. With its commitment to developing a culture of evidence, WASC Senior requires

the utilization and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on learning objectives and outcomes.

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges' Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges' Standard II identifies information competency as a student learning outcome and connects the concept to the library. The library is expected to play a major role in the development of skills related to information competency, and to systematically measure and assess these services to provide evidence of effectiveness of and improvement in the program.
- North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' Higher Learning Commission makes no reference to information literacy. In considering Criteria 3 and 4, however, a strong case can be made that the language used implies much of the same skills involved with information literacy: acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge; and life-long learning habits. The development of these skills is connected to one of the few mentions of the library in the *Handbook* and tied to the concept of learning outcomes, evaluation, and assessment. NCA suggests integrating programs that develop these skills into the undergraduate general education curriculum.
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities does not refer to information literacy by name, although the concept is present within the Eligibility Requirements and Standards in the *Handbook*. Among the Commission's expectations are identifiable outcomes, and competencies in critical thinking skills and library use. Libraries are connected to the teaching of such concepts and measurement and assessment of effectiveness of the program is expected.

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges makes no reference to information literacy in its standards. Expressed, however, is the expectation that institutions will provide access to and training in the use of information technology and library resources.

Common Threads Concerning Information Literacy

Even though three of the Regional Commissions make no reference to the term "information literacy" in their documents, all the Commissions do nevertheless use relatively general terms that are related to the concept (some examples include, critical thinking skills, literacy in the use of technology, and lifelong learning habits). The emphasis placed on these terms may vary from region to region, but there are nevertheless some similarities running through most of the documents:

- Information literacy or related concept is connected but not restricted to the library. Programs supporting the concept are referred to in the standard or criterion on the library. If there is no such standard or criterion (and in some cases even when there is), these programs are placed within the section dealing with general education.
- Information literacy program (or related concept) needs to be connected to the mission and goals of the institution.
- Institutions need to demonstrate effectiveness of program with respect to student achievement through a plan for outcomes assessment.
- Integration of information literacy into syllabi or coursework is encouraged.
- Collaboration is encouraged between librarians and faculty in order to develop information literacy programs (or equivalent).

Current Educational Environment and Accreditation

Without exception, the view on the nature of the educational experience put forth in the current accreditation standards and criteria is the result of a paradigm shift from the traditional model, where undergraduate education relied heavily on lectures and textbooks, to a student-centered model where faculty encourage and facilitate active student participation in the process of learning. This type of active learning takes place through research and discovery using resources outside the classroom (many of the documents from the accrediting commissions cite the academic library as an example of one such resource).

Accordingly, in dealing with the traditional model of education, accreditation standards had previously placed major emphasis on input and output measures, evaluating infrastructure, resources, and processes. If certain conditions were present and certain processes were in place, it was assumed that the institution was worthy of accreditation. This view was to change in the latter part of the twentieth century.

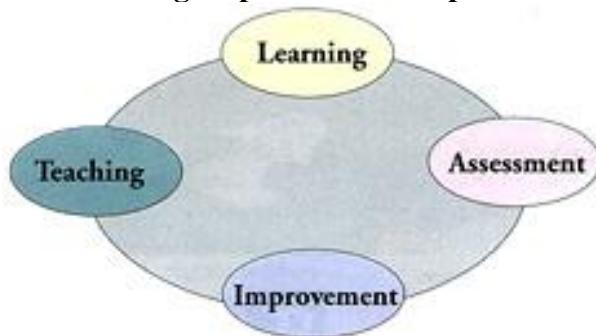
Current accreditation standards and criteria, working within the context of the student-centered model, place major emphasis on the student's learning experience, understanding, and abilities. The central concept in this case is called "student learning outcomes," and it involves not just what students know by the time they graduate, but also the skills they develop (competencies), and the values and attitudes they acquire.

The seven accrediting commissions all express similar expectations about the goal of general education. This goal is a balanced development of students' abilities across various academic fields, including the arts and humanities, the sciences and mathematics, and the social sciences. Furthermore, the general expectation is that graduating students will have met

identifiable outcomes, including the following: effective written and oral communication; abilities in quantitative reasoning; competence in critical analysis and logical thinking; and literacy in the discourse of information and communication technology (language drawn from SACS, Northwest, and Middle States).

Effectiveness in achieving mission and goals at the institutional, programmatic, and course levels is based on the assessment of quantitative and qualitative measurements of the identified learning outcomes. The logic of outcomes assessment, with respect to teaching and learning, is that of a feedback loop where teaching leads to learning, and assessment of learning leads to improvement which results in better teaching.

Figure 1
The Teaching-Improvement Loop²⁰⁴



Implications for Academic Libraries

Within the context of the student-centered educational model, the academic library holds a significant role as far as research capacity and educational support. Many of the regional commissions' documents make references to libraries in sections devoted either to "educational programs" or "effective learning and teaching," expecting general education programs that require the use of the library and learning resources as a means of student development beyond

²⁰⁴ This figure was included in Middle States' *Framework for Outcomes Assessment*, though this particular image of the figure was taken from: AUB Bulletin Today, *The Excellence in Teaching Project: What's Happening*(Feb. 2000, accessed 15 March 2005); available from <http://wwwlb.aub.edu.lb/~webbulletn/v1n4/html/03.htm>.

the classroom. Student learning is seen as a campus-wide responsibility, and thus includes the library.

Mirroring the shift in the institutional outlook on educational philosophy and teaching methods, decisions as to the effectiveness of the library have grown beyond measurements at the input level to include measurements of outputs and outcomes. In the current educational environment, libraries must still identify the resources needed for effective learning and teaching (inputs), and must promote use of these materials by finding creative ways to link up faculty and students with the resources (outputs). However, they must also develop a set of outcomes to provide evidence of their contributions to institutional and educational effectiveness (See Table 4).

Table 4
Decision Making at Key Levels²⁰⁵

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
What kind of budget does the library have?	How can this budget be used efficiently?	How can this budget be used effectively?
What resources does the library have?	Who is accessing these resources and how do they use them?	What do they gain by using these resources?

²⁰⁵ Based on Fraser and McClure, 21. For definitions of “efficiency” and “effectiveness” see Glossary.

Libraries are generally good at collecting data such as the budget spent on library services, number of volumes, circulation statistics, and the ratio of librarians to students. This data is then used to measure the success of particular programs or services. But current accreditation standards and criteria regarding libraries, when stipulated, want such measures to be made within the context of institutional mission and goals, and with outcomes explicitly in mind.

Unfortunately, providing outcomes assessment for library contribution to student learning is an area where many challenges still remain. Libraries sometimes find it difficult to identify and use measures to assess the value they add to student learning because a lot of the value that they add is achieved over time. The regional commissions provide little to no guidance about how the library is supposed to design measures that provide evidence that it contributes to institutional effectiveness.

Another major challenge to the library lies in the differing points of view of various stakeholders, internal and external, to the organization: faculty, deans, legislatures, and employers to name a few. The definition of an outcome, or the perception of what constitutes an appropriate outcome, may vary from group to group. What the library sees as student learning may or may not be the same as what the other stakeholders believe.²⁰⁶

Despite the challenges, pressures, and uncertainties that outcomes assessment presents for the academic library, by connecting its goals, resources, and services with those of the other educational programs on campus, the library can grow beyond its role as just a support service. By participating in campus-wide efforts at outcomes assessment, academic librarians can perhaps become more fully integrated into the academic enterprise.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 23.

Implications for Information Literacy Programs

As we have seen, all the regional commissions expect general education programs to expose students to various ideas across academic fields, developing broad abilities, cognitive skills, and attitudes and values that will foster further intellectual and professional development. Information literacy incorporates all these expectations, playing a meta-cognitive role by transcending specific fields or disciplines.

Several accrediting commissions have identified information literacy as a critical outcome for higher education and have put mandates into place for its assessment. Although not formally identified as such by all the accrediting commissions, information literacy assessment appears in one form or another in all the documents, whether in terms of “technology literacy,” in statements involving library resources, or in otherwise general terminology.

Information literacy is not limited to libraries, but the general understanding in the accreditation documents is that libraries are usually in some way connected. This provides the academic library a basis for becoming a significant player in the institution-wide teaching/learning environment. In articulating desired outcomes for their information literacy program, academic librarians can engage in dialogue and further collaboration with the rest of the educational community at the institution. Through assessment of the progress and achievement of the outcomes related to information literacy, the library staff could design a means of gathering data showing a direct contribution to student learning. While developing tools for this type of assessment might be problematic, there are nevertheless librarians that have done so successfully.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ See for example: Lynn Cameron, "Assessing Information Literacy," in *Integrating Information Literacy into the Higher Education Curriculum: Practical Models for Transformation*, ed. Ilene F. Rockman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004). See also, Bonnie Gratch-Lindauer and Amelie Brown, "Developing a Tool to Assess Community

Libraries may benefit from the fact that the regional commissions' documents explicitly call for all educational units on campus to set their mission and goals in relation to those of the institution, and to measure and assess their contribution to student learning. Quantifying abstract notions like "abilities," or amorphous concepts like "attitudes" might be problematic, but nevertheless information literacy provides academic libraries with an opportunity to redefine their role on campus.²⁰⁸ Whether through its contribution to institution-wide learning objectives and outcomes assessment, or more specifically through assessment of its information literacy program, the academic library can begin to align itself with the teaching and learning functions of the university, taking advantage of its vast information resources and expertise to contribute to the development of graduates ready for the challenges of the twenty-first-century information society.

The present is probably the best and the worst of times for academic libraries and accreditation. With fewer specific mentions in the regional commissions' documents, and with standards and criteria that often seem vague, librarians and information literacy programs face particular challenges in defining proper learning outcomes, measurements, and forms of assessment. But by taking advantage of the opportunities open to them through the current accreditation standards and criteria, academic libraries, by way of their information literacy programs, can create a learning environment that will affect the lives of the present and future generations, and can become an instrumental part in the future of academe and accreditation.

Recommendations

College Students," in *Integrating Information Literacy into the Higher Education Curriculum: Practical Models for Transformation*, ed. Ilene F. Rockman (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004).

²⁰⁸ Research Committee 2003-2004, 6.

It appears that new forms of assessment are emerging in the field of academic librarianship. As such, the following recommendations can be offered:

- Even though the regional accrediting agencies provide little to no guidance in their documents about how libraries might define student learning outcomes, and how they should go about taking measurements to that effect, librarians could, nevertheless, make great use of relevant ACRL documents. Good examples of such documents include the *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* (2000),²⁰⁹ and the *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (2004).²¹⁰ These documents are designed to help librarians define and articulate expected learning outcomes; to establish individual goals within the context of the goals of their institution; and to provide methods for analysis of library related processes and outcomes.
- Academic librarians would do well to participate in campus-wide efforts at assessment of student learning by becoming members of institutional or departmental assessment committees. In doing so, librarians are provided with the opportunity for dialogue with the rest of the faculty. Librarians could use such opportunities to inform and educate their colleagues on the programs and resources available at the library, and to champion a commitment to the academic library as an important part of the educational environment on the campus.
- Finally, academic librarians should consider taking an active role in the accreditation process. On-site evaluation teams for accrediting agencies tend to be made up of generalists. Librarians are well-suited for such roles, especially given the wealth of

²⁰⁹ Association of College and Research Libraries and American Association of Junior Colleges, (accessed).

²¹⁰ Association of College and Research Libraries, *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (June 2004, accessed 1 June 2005); available from <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standardslibraries.htm>.

knowledge they possess in the creation, acquisition, and application of knowledge across the disciplines. Concerns of the academic librarian are concerns that cut across the entire educational enterprise. By becoming involved with the accreditation process, librarians can help ensure that the needs of the academic library are, if not always met, then at least emphasized and given consideration.

GLOSSARY²¹¹

Accreditation

In the US, the process wherein a non-governmental commission evaluates the performance of an institution in regards to the institutions abilities to meet with certain standards and criteria aimed at improving educational quality and gaining public trust. The process of accreditation generally involves three steps involving self-study and self evaluation (performed in-house by the institution); a study visit (performed by a team of peers); and an examination by the commission of evidence in meeting the set standards and policies.

Regional Accreditation: Accreditation granted to institutions by agencies that hold authority within designated geographic areas. US has 6 such agencies.

Assessment

The process of systematic gathering of data or measures and assembling them in some understandable form. Assessment may be done at an institutional, program, or course level. Data is gathered in relation to quantitative and qualitative evidence of educational activities and student learning outcomes. The expected result is an evaluation and improvement of effective teaching and learning activities at the institution.

Competency-based Assessment: An evaluation of student performance not judged in reference to the performance of other students, but according to a specific learning objective or a performance standard.

Competency

A set of innate or learned characteristics that indicate the aptitude to acquire proficiency in a given area.

Criteria

A method of describing the requirements, rules, guidelines, or characteristics of a standard, providing the quantitative and qualitative basis upon which evidence of performance may be critically evaluated. (See also, Standards).

Culture of Evidence

An institutional convention wherein faculty and administration are involved in the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, making regular evaluations to inform institutional planning, decision-making, and improvement, especially in regards to teaching and learning activities.

²¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated the definitions in this glossary are either quoted or else draw significantly on Lazar Vlasceanu, Laura Grünberg, and Dan Părlea, *Quality Assurance and Accreditation: A Glossary of Basic Terms and Definitions*(UNESCO, 2004, accessed 16 Jan. 2005); available from <http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&lr=&q=cache:tnxVTQc8K2EJ:mail.cepes.ro/publications/pdf/QA%26A%2520Glossary.pdf+22northwest+Commission%22+Colleges+Universities>.

Rather than provide a checklist of adherence to prescribed expectations, evidence provided should indicate the consistency of programs with the institution's mission and goals.

Effectiveness

A measure of the quality in accomplishment of specific objectives, especially relevant to success in meeting educational goals and requirements. Measure can be taken through various procedures and should relate to student learning and academic achievement. "Effectiveness" is distinguished from "efficiency," which is measures the volume of the input used against the output achieved.²¹²

Efficiency

Can be measured in terms of costs vs. resources, time, or effort. Greater efficiency is achieved by providing the same teaching and learning activities at a lower cost, or providing more useful teaching and learning activities at the same cost. Efficiency does not automatically lead to effectiveness.²¹³

Indicators

Indicators are not standards in and of themselves, but suggest the type of evidence an institution might provide to track performance over time, and to show whether or not standards are met. Indicators operationalize theoretical definitions of quality.²¹⁴

Inputs

Raw material, such as financial, physical, or human resources, that may be used in developing a program.

Outcomes

Changes in learners achieved as a direct result of participation in specific instructional programs—includes but not limited to knowledge, skills, competencies, or attitudes. "Outcomes" are distinguished from "objectives" in that outcomes are the tangible results as to what the learner will be able to do, whereas objectives are overall desires and intentions.

²¹² Max Wideman, *Wideman Comparative Glossary of Project Management Terms*(2003, accessed 16 Jan. 2005); available from http://www.maxwideman.com/pmglossary/PMG_E01.htm.

²¹³ Ibid.(accessed).

²¹⁴ Georgia Professional Standards Commission, *Lexicon*(2003, accessed 6 Jan. 2005); available from <http://www.gapsc.com/help.asp>.

Outcomes Assessment: The method of evaluation and enhancement of particular results that demonstrate effectiveness at the institutional, program, or course level. Generally used for institutional self-study and to evaluate student needs.

Student Learning Outcomes: Statements that make clear the minimum that students will be expected to know, understand, and demonstrate by the completion of instruction at the course or program level.

Student Outcome Assessment: The process of gathering, analyzing, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative data on learning outcomes, examining their congruence with learning objectives and goals, and using the results to encourage improvement.

Quantitative Outcomes: Also known as “hard” outcomes, quantitative outcomes focus on numbers, such as the number of books in the library’s collections, the number of credit hours spent by students, or the number of students placed in jobs after graduation. Traditionally, accreditation standards have often involved the use of this type of objective data.

Qualitative Outcomes: Also known as “soft” outcomes, qualitative outcomes are more subjective in nature than quantitative data. Nevertheless, the recent trend has been toward this type of outcomes measures along with quantitative outcomes in order to create a more complete picture of institutional effectiveness. Data gathered might include overall measures of educational effectiveness, achievement, and success.

Outputs

Measures that serve to quantify the effort. These could include circulation statistics, satisfaction surveys, etc.

Quality

Quality can take on different definitions depending on the context or the educational model in which it is used. Issues that may have a say in the definition can include the requirements of stakeholders, the mission and goals of individual institutions, or attributes viewed as valuable in a particular setting. All definitions of quality, however, share some common aspects: assurance of fulfillment of minimum standards and benchmarks; the capacity for setting objectives and achieving them effectively and efficiently; accountability and gratifying the needs and expectations of stakeholders; and constantly aiming at progress and improvement.

Quality Assessment: The process of external, peer-review evaluation of institutions and their programs, processes, practices, and services.

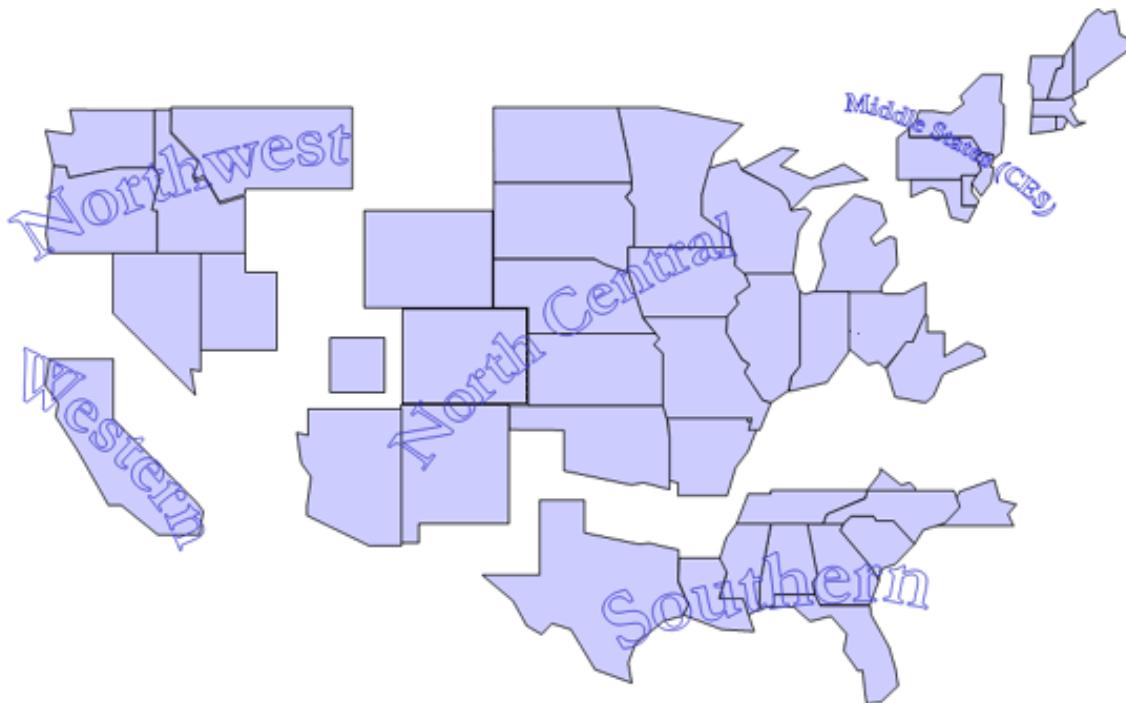
Quality Assurance: A comprehensive term involving proof of accountability and improvement evidenced through a continuous process of assessment and evaluation using established criteria. Quality assurance is a prerequisite for accreditation.

Standards

Sometimes used synonymously with “criteria,” this term refers to statements that refer to characteristics and qualities that must be met by an institution seeking accreditation. Standards can be prescriptive or motivational, but they always need to express clearly desires and expectations. Standards may be quantitative or qualitative in nature, and may have different reference points like inputs, outputs, or processes.

APPENDIX A

Map of Regional Accreditation²¹⁵



²¹⁵ Commission on International and Transregional Accreditation, (accessed 9 April 2005); available from <http://www.citaschools.org/contact>.

APPENDIX B

Chronology of the Regional Accrediting Agencies

New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

Founded in 1885

Previous Standards: 1983

Current Standards: Adopted 1992, revised in 2001

Draft Standards: Begun in 2004, will begin to apply by 2006

Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools

Founded in 1887

[1st ed. 1919; '41,; '53; '57; '71; '78; '82; '88; '89; '94]

Previous Standards: 1994

Current Standards: Revised 2002, editorial changes in 2004

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA)

Founded in 1895

Previous Standards: 1998

Current Standards: 2004

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC)

Founded in 1895

Previous Standards: 1986 (1996)

Current Standards: 2001

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

Founded in 1917

[1st ed. 1965; rev.ed.1966, '68, '70, '72, '73, '75, '77, '78, '80, '82, '84, '88, '92, '94, '96]

Previous Standards: 1999

Current Standards: 2003

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

Founded in 1962*

--WASC-Senior

Previous Standards: 1988
Current Standards: 2000

--WASC-Junior

Previous Standards: 1990

Current Standards: Adopted in June 1995; revised in January 1996;
and further revised in January 2004

* The Western College Association began as a membership discussion group in 1924 and started accreditation activity in 1948. Previously, California institutions had been served by the Northwest Association and the University of California. The two postsecondary commissions of the Western Association were established in 1962.

APPENDIX C

Chronology of Some Important Events in the History of Information Literacy

1971—ACRL Committee on Bibliographic Instruction (Ad Hoc) is created.

1971—First Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX) conference.

1974—First mention of the term “information literacy” in library science and information literature. Coined by Paul G. Zurkowski.

1977—ACRL Board of Directors approves the establishment of a Bibliographic Instruction Section.

1984—Beginnings of the Internet going public. Libraries can begin to use online resources.

1985—National Commission on Libraries states that “the basic objective of education is for each student to learn how to identify needed information, locate, organize, and present it in a clear and persuasive manner.”²¹⁶

1986—Carnegie Foundation reports major correlation between libraries and quality undergraduate education.²¹⁷

1989—ALA releases report defining the term, “information literacy.”

1989—National Forum on Information Literacy (NFIL) is founded. Organization publishes ALA’s “Nine Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning.”²¹⁸

1991—World Wide Web released—online information literacy becomes a possibility.

1994—ACRL Standards for community, Junior, and Technical College Learning Resource Programs is published.

1997—Institute for Information Literacy (IIL) is created.

2000—ALA’s Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) approves the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.

2001—ACRL Board releases “Objectives for Information Literacy Instruction: A Model Statement for Academic Librarians,” and “Report on the National Information Literacy Survey: Documenting progress throughout the United States.”

²¹⁶ Friedrich K. Brose, "Information Competency and Community College Librarians: California Moves toward a Graduation Requirement," *Community & Junior College Libraries* 11, no. 1 (2002): 7.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

APPENDIX D

Cross Reference Chart of Keyword Occurrences in the Agencies' Documents

	Information Literacy	Library or Libraries	Information Resources	Learning Outcomes	Assessment
Middle States	13	15	11	23	144
NEASC (current)	1	11	9	1	2
NEASC (draft)	2	7	19	5	10
WASC Senior	2	7	12	5	21
WASC-ACCJC	2	16	0	33	<u>13</u>
North Central	0	14	0	17	<u>77</u>
NWCCU	0	64	44	6	47
SACS-COC	0	5	4	2	3

APPENDIX E

A Chart of Where the Commissions Stand Regarding their Views on Information Literacy, Especially in Connection with the Academic Library*

Middle States	WASC Junior	WASC Senior	NEASC	SACS	Northwest	North Central
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* This chart is not based on any kind of mathematical formulations. It is instead based on the ideas put forth by the Commissions in the text of their documents on accreditation standards and criteria.

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